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ALL THE RUSSIAS

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T.M. THE TSAR AND TSARITSA AT HOME

ALL THE RUSSIAS

TRAVELS AND STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN RUSSIA, FINLAND, SIBERIA THE CAUCASUS, & CENTRAL ASIA

3963

BY

HENRY NORMAN, M.P.

AUTHOR OF

"THE PEOPLES AND POLITICS OF THE FAR EAST"

"THE REAL JAPAN," ETC.

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WITH ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS CHIEFLY FROM THE AUTHOR'S PHOTOGRAPHS AND FOUR MAPS

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TO

MY SON NIGEL

. . . olim hoc pro patre loquetur

PREFACE

THIS volume is the outcome of fifteen years' interest in Russian affairs, culminating in four journeys—one of nearly 20,000 miles—in European and Asiatic Russia. In the course of these, besides a residence of some time in St. Petersburg, and visits to the principal cities, I travelled in Finland, in Siberia as far as Lake Baikal (I had previously been to Vladivostok), in the Caucasus, and in Central Asia as far as the frontier of Kashgar. During all these journeys I was afforded opportunities of seeing and investigating every matter that interested me, and of making the acquaintance of the chief Russian administrators in every part. Indeed, official courtesy went so far as to convey me, by a special train and a special steamer, to places I could not otherwise have seen, and to provide for my safety on another occasion by an escort of Cossacks.

In case the reader may wonder how, without a mastery of the Russian language, I held the conversations and made the inquiries here described, I may say that during my chief journeys I took with me as interpreter a young

Russian gentleman, a student of law at the University of Moscow, whose knowledge and intelligent sympathy were of the greatest service to me. Without such help, or the ability to speak Russian fluently, a journey for any serious purpose in Russia outside the two capitals would be a waste of time.

It has not been my object to write a comprehensive account of Russian institutions and Russian life. This exists in admirable form in the two volumes of Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace, which remain, when allowance is made for the changes since their publication, the most instructive and trustworthy general work upon Russia. My own modest aim has been to present a picture of the aspects of contemporary Russia of most interest to foreign readers, with especial reference to the recent remarkable industrial and commercial development of Russia, and the possibility of closer commercial and political relations between Russia and Great Britain. This last I regard as the most important question (after Anglo-American relations) in British foreign politics to-day.

As in former books, I have tried to present in their natural relationship the picturesque surface and the solid substratum of fact, in the hope of making my pages at the same time entertaining and informing. I trust, therefore, that the reader will not resent the occasional close proximity of the light and the weighty.

It has been my strenuous endeavour to be fair and frank in my judgments, and so far as one may, to divest

myself of inborn and acquired prejudices. I have never accepted any courtesy that might in the slightest degree fetter my freedom of speech. Feelings about each other, however, run so high in both Russians and Englishmen that it is probably impossible for a writer of either country to hold the balance of his judgment perfectly level, but I anticipate with satisfaction that in England I shall be regarded as too pro-Russian, and in Russia as too anti-Russian.

With two insignificant exceptions—the Governor of Samarkand and the Chief of Police at Askhabad—I received at all times the greatest kindness and courtesy, indeed, the most friendly help, from Russian officials everywhere. The list of all to whom I owe thanks, including many British representatives, would be too long, and I must therefore content myself with a cordial acknowledgment in general terms. I cannot omit, however, to beg His Excellency Monsieur de Witte, Minister of Finance, to accept my most sincere and respectful thanks for permitting me to have frequent recourse to his distinguished assistance, and for honouring my journeys with a sympathy which opened to me every official door in Russia.

To escape one minor criticism I may say that my rendering of Russian proper names exhibits certain inconsistencies, but that, while retaining accepted spellings of familiar names, I have endeavoured to follow a simple and accurate system of transliteration.

The majority of my illustrations are reproduced from

my own photographs. The rest I procured in the places where they were taken. The striking photographs of Their Majesties the Tsar and Tsaritsa were taken by Messrs. Gan & Co., of Tsarskoe Selo. The maps have been specially drawn for this volume.

H. N.

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CHAPTER I

ST. PETERSBURG AND THE WAY THERE

"RUSSIA!"

What a flock of thoughts take wing as the word strikes the ear! Does any word in any language, except the dear name of one's own land, mean as much to-day?

What *is* Russia? The unfettered, irresponsible, limitless, absolute rule of one man over a hundred millions of his fellows—is that it? The *ikon* in the corner of every room where the language is spoken, the blue-domed basilica in every street of great cities, the long-haired priests chanting in deep bass, the pedestrian ceaselessly crossing himself, the Holy Synod, whose God-given task it is to coerce or to cajole a heathen world to orthodoxy—is *that* Russia? Or is it the society of the capital, speaking all languages, familiar with all literatures, practising every art, lapped in every luxury, esteeming manners more highly than morals? Or is it the vast and nearly roadless country, where settlements are to distances like fly-specks to window-panes; where the conveniences, the comforts, and often the decencies of civilisation may be sought in vain outside the towns and away

THE RUSSIAN POLICEMAN

from the lines of railway; where entire villages are the prey of disease; where seven people out of every ten can neither read nor write?

Siberia is Russia—five million square miles, in which whole countries are a quivering carpet of wild-flowers in spring, a rolling grain-field in autumn, an ice-bound waste in winter, stored full of every mineral, crossed by the longest railway in the world, and largely inhabited by a population of convicts and exiles.

Central Asia is Russia—a million and a half square miles of barren desert and irrigated oasis, the most famous cities of Asia and the greatest river, a few years ago the hot-bed of Mussulman fanaticism, probably the cradle of the human race, and possibly the scene of its most fateful conflict.

The Eastern Question is—how will Russia try again to get Constantinople? The Far Eastern Question is—will Russia succeed in dominating China? A question of questions for the British Empire is—will Russia attempt to invade India?

The Triple Alliance is a league against Russia. The Dual Alliance is Russia's reply. Russia called the nations to the Conference of Peace.

It would be easier to say what is *not* Russia. In world-affairs, wherever you turn you see Russia; whenever you listen you hear her. She moves in every path; she is mining in every claim. The "creeping murmur" of the world is her footfall—the "poring dark" is her veil. To the challenge of the nations, as they peer from their borders, comes ever the same reply—

"Who goes there?"

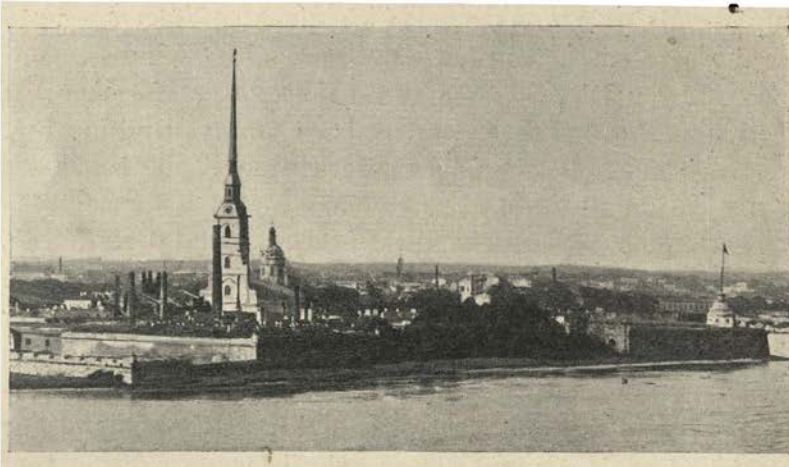
"*Russia!*"

It is a long way to St. Petersburg on the map. Across a corner of France, right across Belgium, across Germany, and a final northward stretch up to the Gulf of Finland—what an endless railway journey it must be! As a matter of fact, the capital of Russia is a whole day nearer London by rail than Seville, and

exactly the same distance as Naples. You leave Charing Cross at eleven ; an engine, dining-car and sleeping-car of the International Sleeping Car Company are waiting on a siding at Calais ; as soon as the conductor has secured all the passengers on his list the little train starts with a rush, and hardly checks its almost alarming speed until it lands you on the platform at Brussels, ahead of the train from Ostend which brings the direct passengers from Dover—the better route—by its proper few minutes. Only once are you delayed by one of the ridiculous performances so dear to the heart of the Continental official. At Blandain, where the train enters Belgium, all the registered luggage is bundled out upon the platform, hastily fumbling porters thread string through the buckles and handles of each bag and portmanteau, and a solemn functionary, approaching like a questioner of the Inquisition, affixes lead seals to the knots, by means of a pair of iron forceps a yard long. You leave Brussels at four minutes past six, the German frontier is crossed at Herbesthal at half-past nine, and you are in bed as the train runs through Cologne at eighteen minutes past eleven. While you are taking your morning coffee the miles of new houses, wide streets, and long avenues of Berlin flash by—the newest-looking capital in the world, and all day long the plains of agricultural Germany unroll, where innumerable stacks of straw prove how grain grows under an agrarian tariff.

Military concentration is writ large over the railway hereabouts. At every station as you approach the frontier the lines expand into a dozen, each alongside a platform, obviously that trains may be filled and emptied quickly, collected or distributed without block and delay, if ever it should be necessary to hurl the military might of Germany northward. So far as transport is concerned, the fateful word " Mobilise " would evidently find everything as ready on this frontier as on the other. One mailed fist stretches over the Rhine, but another is clenched by the Baltic. Eydtkuhnen, the last frontier station, is of course filled

with uniforms, and as the train moves on we catch, through the dusk, glimpses of fortifications low and broad and new, as we have seen several times already, commanding the line and its approaches. I find myself wondering, as we glide away, at which platform the group of German officers stood a few years ago to look for their traveller from over the frontier, standing at



THE FORTRESS AND CATHEDRAL OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL, ST. PETERSBURG

the sleeping-car door with a packet in his hand—a packet which betrayed one of the best-kept secrets of the world; which caused quick recalls and surprising promotions in that class of men who serve their countries by combining the rôles of gentleman and spy; which gave the hangman a hasty job in the recesses of a famous fortress, and threw upon the charity of His Majesty the Tsar—never sought in such circumstances in vain—a widow and a child.

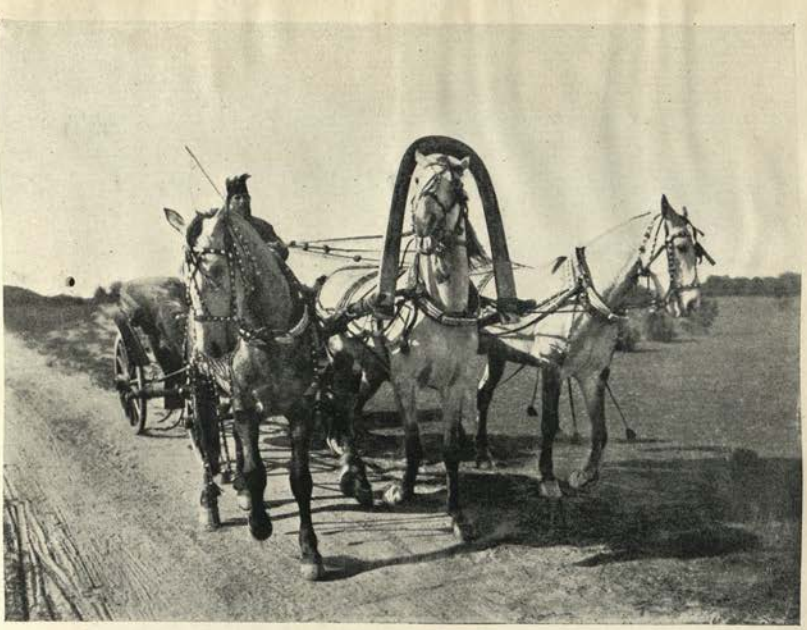
You make your entry into Russia like a thief in the night. It is after eight o'clock, and dark, when you all pour in anxious flood from the train into the Customs Hall at Vierzhbolovo, or in German, Wirballen. Commanding figures in grey and gold, whom you take at the first glance to be at least Major-Gene-

rals, but who are really officers of police and Customs, stand by the doors ; a soldier collects passports as the passengers enter until he has a great sheaf of all sizes and colours ; and a little army of porters in blouses and magenta belts and top-boots carries off the luggage, and quickly sorts it by the baggage numbers it bears. The officials gather round a table in the middle of the hall, where the passports are registered and stamped with a notice that you cannot leave Russia again without a police permit, or without a Russian passport if your stay has lasted six months. I expected that our luggage would be ransacked through and through. On the contrary, I have never been more courteously treated, nor more expeditiously dispatched. But the striking contrast with all other Continental Custom Houses was the silence, the discipline, the routine, the order—there was neither rudeness nor chatter.

The gauge of the Russian railway is wider than the German, with the obvious intention of preventing German rolling-stock from being available in Russia in case of invasion, so you change cars here—the only time between Calais and St. Petersburg —and in the night, with the wood-sparks belching from the big engine and tearing past the carriage windows, you pursue your unseen way through the mysterious country whose name has sounded differently in your ear from the name of every other country on the map since first you heard it. You only know it *is* Russia, because it differs so much from every description you have read of it. The mahogany-panelled carriage is lighted by a score of candles, among which more silent, dignified servants move, pouring vodka and bringing tea in glasses—and this is the only Russian thing, so far, in which popular rumour has met its liabilities.

Express speed in Russia, as exemplified by the Nord Express, is about twenty miles an hour, so the wide car runs easily and quietly. The red sparks fly ever from the wood-fed engine, the night passes and the dawn grows pink and grey over Russia.

And what do you see? Why, heather! Miles upon miles of the lavender-pink ling, faithfully making carpet as ever for the silver birches and the Scotch firs, whose feet, seemingly, are not at ease beneath any other rug—Scotch firs, spruces, the Austrian Christmas-tree, silver birch, low-growing alder, and that shrubby tree I know only as "Scotch mahogany." It grows here by loch sides, as in Scotland, where it makes your fingers pink when you cut a switch of it to string five meagre, peaty trout upon. There is hardly a sign of life. Little grey wood-shingled cottages, the house not to be known from the stable; little scrappy patches of oats, very short in the straw and very poor in the ear; the occasional huddled figure of a peasant moving slowly in the wake of some saddened beast. Here, in these Baltic provinces, is not the wealth of Russia—neither the industrial nor the agricultural sphere of activity I have come to see. Here is landscape, simple, vast, unalterable landscape—not country malleable to the touch of ambitious or covetous humanity. A crop, when there is one, rises bleakly, half-heartedly, from the sparse soil. Earth is grim, and has no heart to laugh with produce. To him who deplaces the heather and lops its guardian fir-tree little good comes, as we know, and small increase. In these vast moorland and water-sodden spaces—for there is water, yes, and bulrushes and dabchicks, too—there is no joy of life. The moorland, with its melancholy, wistful smile, is suited rather to death and her sables. See—as we speak, in the middle of the moor, upon some poor trodden pathway, apparently a funeral train! Some disheartened peasant, who has laid by his futile mattock, quitted the crazy plough, dropped the blunted sickle. Black figures, in close procession, in the grey, cold hour of morning, hooded and shrouded in humble weeds. How it fills out the picture; how it accords with the minor scale; how entirely it is approved by the imagination! It is the right thing, the only thing one knows, to suit with this Russian moorland, where life is not encouraged, where death is all at home. It is—well, possibly it



THE DASHING TROIKA

THE HOMELY SLEIGH

might be many more things, but we must stay our reflections, for a sapient member of the party has pointed out that it is not a funeral procession at all, but a row of peat-stacks—native to the moorland, too.

And what else do we see? Every mile or two enormous heaps of pine-wood and silver birch, cut in blocks a foot long, and laid with marvellous precision—acres and acres of this cheapest and costliest of fuels—cheapest because its price is but the blow of an axe, costliest because it leaves sterility, famine, and flood behind it. Each station is ramparted around with these wood-stacks, each river we cross is choked with huge barges carrying it away. And whenever the train stops we see, moving silently behind the crowd of uniforms, the peasants of Bulgaria and Servia and Austrian Poland—the same poverty, the same sackcloth and sheepskins, the same rope shoes, the same loaf of black bread. They prove the existence of a tie one did not suspect between the Balkan countries which Russia loves and which do not always love her. We see Vilna, where one June Napoleon entered in triumph, and whence one December he fled from his own army, leaving 20,000 sick and five millions of francs behind; and where the last Polish revolution died when its leaders were executed. We see Pskov, where Europe first touched hands with what has since become Russia, where the Duke of Moscow destroyed a republic, where Ivan the Terrible fled from an idiot saint, where Gustavus Adolphus with his army knocked at the walls in vain, where Peter the Great kept his cannons and his powder. And we see Gatchina, one of the summer residences of the Imperial Family, and where the best trout come from. Then, almost without transition of suburbs, the train draws up in a plain, lead-coloured station, and we are in the city which the great Tsar Peter built in the waters of the Neva and named after himself.

It is a remarkable railway journey—from Charing Cross to St. Petersburg in fifty hours, with only one change of carriage

where the gauge changes, with bed and board of the best, with never a single stop of more than five minutes, and such punctuality that, due at St. Petersburg at 2.45, the station clock is striking three as we drive with our luggage out of the yard. This journey is one of many such owed by travellers to the enterprise which makes this imposing cross upon the map—from Calais to Constantinople, and from Gibraltar to Irkutsk.

A *troika* dashes down the Nevski Prospect, the horse in the shafts trotting desperately, the others galloping on either side, their heads bent outward. Over the housetops rise the five bulbous domes, like inverted balloons, that crown the church now standing where Alexander II. fell. At the corner of the great bazaar is a little votive chapel to the saint who caused people to subscribe so liberally to rebuild the bazaar when it was burned, and as they pass, the well-to-do cross themselves and the poor doff their caps. All these are incongruities. They look as odd as a leather bottél would amid silver and cut-glass. They are bits of real Russia—St. Petersburg is a foreign city, and a hybrid one to boot. Any quarter of it would be at home in Paris or Potsdam or Pesth. Peter the Great built it in the Neva swamps as "a window toward Europe," in Algarotti's memorable phrase; and that is precisely what it remains. For a long time every educated Russian wished to make his country like Western Europe; he resented above all things being called uncivilised, and civilisation meant to him French architecture and English manners. St. Petersburg is the embodiment of this wish. Provincial Russians still hugely admire their capital, but if it were to be rebuilt now it would resemble Moscow, and not Milan. The fashion of imitating the West has passed; to-day to be patriotic is to be Russian, and so far from following the mode of the outside world, to wait confidently till the outside world shall learn that the Russian mode is better and shall lay aside its heathenism, its parliamentarianism, its socialism, the licence it

THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. ISAAC, ST. PETERSBURG

calls liberty, and all its other wickednesses, and walk in the only path of religious truth and social security. So to the Russian, St. Petersburg is no longer Russia, while to the visitor it is cosmopolitan and therefore, as a whole, uninteresting.

I say, as a whole, for the city of Peter the Great and all his successors cannot fail to contain many things to arrest the attention. Its churches, for example, are the most splendid of any modern churches in the world—indeed their costliness is in curious contrast with their modernity. In other countries cathedrals are magnificent through the faith and the munificence of men of old time; here our contemporaries have set their creed in gold and gems. St. Isaac's Cathedral, from whose magnificent dome the best view of the city is obtained, whose gloom hides untold wealth upon its altars, whose colossal steps are each formed of a single stone, whose four sides of great granite monoliths are unsurpassed, and whose pillars of malachite and lapis lazuli are unapproached elsewhere, was consecrated the year in which I was born. A semicircular colonnade leads from the Nevski to the cathedral of our wonder-working Lady of Kazan, where the name of the Almighty blazes in diamonds, where half a ton of silver marks an outburst of Cossack piety, where pearls and sapphires seem to have no value, so lavishly are they strewed, and it dates from 1811. Wealth in Russia seems to pour itself toward the habitation and the decoration of religion. Any reason suffices for a new church. Of course, where Alexander II. fell a superb church is rising, and its dazzling group of blue and green and white and gold cupolas is visible from every part of the city. In its centre are the very paving-stones upon which he fell, and the soil stained with his blood. Such a solemn memorial is natural and inevitable, but a fire at the market, and a generous popular subscription to rebuild it, is excuse for a highly decorated little chapel on the Nevski itself, before which innumerable passers stop and pray, diverting the traffic like a boulder in a stream.

One church only, meagrely endowed in comparison with the rest, is profoundly rich in association. A spire like a needle rises almost from the Neva, and at its base are the heavy casemates where the water laps drearily forever at inscrutable dungeons behind—church and the dungeons alike dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul. The citadel is upon an island, where Peter's generals first camped, and which he found good and made the focus of the city to be. Upon it is his cottage, a log-house of four rooms, now carefully protected by another structure built over and around it. Here is his dining-room, his reception-room, his dark little bedroom, the very chair in which he sat, the very objects he made. You see nothing of the prison of which you have heard so much, except its walls upon the river and its dark water-gate, for as you drive to the cathedral through the land-gate the modern mint is before you, the church to your right, and a long row of single-storey barracks to your left. And it is useless to ask questions. Very few people know what passes within, and these few never open their lips. But the horror has departed from this place, for nowadays prisoners of State are carried to the fortress of Schlüsselburg, also an island in the Neva, forty miles away. Concerning this prison absolute secrecy prevails. I made the acquaintance of an intimate relation of the Governor, and he assured me that never in the closest family talk had he ever heard a syllable concerning it. So far as silence goes, it is indeed a living grave, the stony replica of the closed lips of autocracy. But all the world may drive through the low red-brick gate of the citadel to the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, and gaze through its narrow gloom upon all the mouldering flags of conquered enemies and all the rusting keys of surrendered towns. These are but poor things, however, to what lies below them—the long rows of square white marble tombs, where, each under the same gilt cross and with nothing but a name to mark the difference, repose forever all the Tsars, save one, of all the Russias, since Tsars and Russia were.

THE NEVSKI PROSPECT, ST. PETERSBURG

Of this long line, two only impress their personality in St. Petersburg to-day. One, the first, the great Peter, who did everything, designed everything, foresaw everything. The other, the emancipator, whose blood stained the street twenty years ago, impressive because of the contents of one little room. At the Hermitage, once Catharine's pavilion, but since 1850 the magnificent home of the world-famous collection of pictures, you may see Peter in his habit as he lived. A life-size wax portrait model, sitting in his own chair, dressed in the very clothes he wore, grasping the sword given to him by that deposed ruler of Poland once called "the strong," shows you his great height and his vigilant black eyes. In a glass case is the yellow charger he rode on that July day at Pultava when he founded Russia upon the ruins of Sweden, and beside it, almost as big—for the moth-eaten handiwork of this early taxidermist must have shrunk pitifully since it bore that royal load—runs his favourite yellow hound. All around are hundreds of his instruments and lathes and tools, and the things those strong busy hands made with them. And an attendant, observing with pleased anticipation your great interest, selects from a group of walking-sticks his heavy iron staff, and catches it as it falls from your unready grasp, and then, placing a tall stick upright beside you, shows you the notch at Peter's height a foot above your head.

Since Peter the Great foresaw so many things, it is possible enough that when he crushed the aboriginal frogs of the Neva marshes beneath his heel he foresaw the Island Parks too. The Neva, with its broad, slow, silver flood, stealing to the sea by many ways, holds netted certain flat islands, called Kamennoi and Yelagin, in its watery strands, and these have been laid out and planted with an art which worked hand in hand with nature. The result is a series of parks, among which summer villas, called *datchas*, nestle and sandy roads wind fancifully, but all with an artlessness of which other European parks have lost the secret. But with what a prodigality it has been done, these smooth roads,

these solid embankments to protect the edges of the lagoons, these miles of silver birches and firs and other graceful trees! Indeed, this is a reflection that rises often to one's lips in Russia, meaning not only what money—and money has always weltered forth—but what time, what labour, what tenacious clinging to an ideal seen afar off! Flying along these soft roads come the Russian horses, beautiful black stallions, flecked with white foam, driven with outstretched arms by a coachman of Gargantuan size in his wadded gown of blue cloth. He calls out as he goes, he leans over his beasts, his narrow waistbelt of Eastern silk emphasises his enormous girth, the reins, half of leather and half of blue or orange webbing, flap their buckled sides upon the horses' flanks—he scorns a whip. The master or mistress of all this sits firmly back in the diminutive dark blue or green drosky —a light phaeton with tiny front wheels—and the big Orloff plunges forward, his wooden arched collar framing his proud head, his flowing tail streaming out behind—it is the most familiar sight in St. Petersburg, and an exhilarating one. Suddenly, "B-r-r-r!" says the driver, the horse pulls up, and you are at the Point, with one of the loveliest water-views in the world before you. From the end of the farthest island you gaze toward Kronstadt down the Neva, so shallow in her vast width that only a few yachts flutter across her breast, for the steamers may not venture out of a dredged channel between close-set buoys. After the green shade of the woods and the little eye-like pools looking out of their seclusion, the open of blue sky seems enormous, the water is a silver floor, and something in this peep into the infinite —it may be the tumble of opalescent clouds piled upon the horizon—reminds you of the other great water-view of Europe, down the Sea of Marmora. To my eye, the island parks of Petersburg —they are within half an hour of the centre of the city—are the most beautiful town drive in Europe.

But though the Neva brings beauty, it brings misery, too. Along its quays in the populous parts of the city are thousands

of cellar-dwellings, where the poor live. When a certain wind blows back from the sea the river rises and floods these tenements, and the wretched inhabitants have to forsake them till the water subsides, when they return with their bits of furniture to their reeking homes. A paternal government, however, thoughtfully causes a gun to be fired from the citadel when the river is rising, and its boom across the waters warns the cellar-dwellers to escape. St. Petersburg, it is perhaps needless to add, is an unhealthy place, damp and depressing, and in summer, when water is low and sewage is high, the canals with which it is intersected smell horribly. Only in winter, when damp and other evil things are frozen solid, is it bracing and clean, and even then, you must remember, every window in every house is hermetically sealed, except for one air-hole.

The little room I have spoken of as conveying the impression of the second personality is in the Winter Palace. Here there is much to see. Beautiful rooms, halls huge and white, enamelled in pink or white marble, so delicate as to be lovely, although an imitation, and giving a sense of light and freshness not common in palaces. Three thousand people can dance in the Winter Palace at one time; over two thousand people, after a ball, can sup. Never, in Europe, can there be a scene of more brilliance than this—every woman in extravagant loveliness, every man in uniform, most of them blazing with stars and medals, of which there are nowhere so many as here. But after endless marchings through the countless chambers, great and small, from the Throne Room to the private apartments of visiting royalties, which seem in almost all the palaces of Continental Europe to have been designed by the same architect and furnished by the same upholsterer, the official with you knocks at a door and retires. The door is slowly opened by an old man with many medals—a grave, melancholy old man. He is the keeper of the private apartments of Alexander II., which have been sacredly preserved exactly as he left them. On Sunday morning, March 13,

1881, the Tsar was writing in his room, smoking a cigarette. It was his custom to inspect some regiment on Sunday mornings, and on this day he was due at the parade of the marines in the Michael Riding School. Five times had the Nihilists tried to kill him, and at least twice they had nearly succeeded. They almost blew up the Imperial train, and they actually blew up the guard-room and dining-room of the Winter Palace and failed of their chief purpose only because the Imperial dinner had been arranged for half an hour later than usual, in order that a royal visitor, Prince Alexander of Hesse, might be present. The air was once more full of terrorist threats, and the Tsar's son and heir, and his most trusted adviser, begged him not to go to the inspection. But Alexander, brave and obstinate and fatalistic, was not to be deterred. He laid his half-smoked cigarette upon an ash-tray, picked up a loosely folded clean handkerchief from the table, slipped his little silver-plated, ivory-handled revolver into his pocket, buckled on his sword and left the room. An hour later he was carried back, fast bleeding to death, one leg shattered to the thigh, the other to the knee, and placed upon the narrow iron bed in the recess, and there he breathed his last.

As the room was, so it remains. The half-smoked cigarette lies upon the ash-tray in a glass tube. The little revolver lies before the mirror. Upon each of the tables and several of the chairs is a loosely folded clean handkerchief, for it was the Tsar's wish to have one of these always within reach of his hand. Here are his toilet articles—a plain small set of bottles and brushes, from a rusty morocco folding case, evidently bought in England before we invented the modern luxurious dressing-bag. It is all modest beyond belief, and the brushes are half worn. This was a monarch who did not care to spend any of his incalculable wealth upon personal luxuries. The walls of the room are covered by bookcases, all quite full of books obviously read. Among them, just behind his chair, I noticed the two volumes of Drumont's *La France Juive*, showing signs of much handling. Op-

posite the foot of the camp-bed hangs a portrait, rather crudely painted, of a little daughter who died, and below the portrait, neatly folded, lie the last frocks she wore, which her father kept always by him. It is all extraordinarily affecting. Had he lived, I could never by any chance have thus known his private life and looked at his intimate belongings. I should have seen Alexander II. in uniform, a tall figure, a composed, not intellectual face—seen him in those very clothes that are now in a glass case in a church—but he would have been covered with his great dignities, cased by the enormous loneliness of his position as an Emperor. I should never have known that the maroon-coloured frock, dating from the time when children were most hideously clad of all, belonging to his little dead daughter, had to be spread upon a table in the rear of his study for him to come and look at, and a blue frock, too, which she was wearing when that picture hanging above it was painted. I should not have seen the short iron bed, humbly draped in some Turkish stuff, neither rich nor costly, on which behind a bit of archway he could rest himself. He would have been merely the great remote Tsar, the Liberator of the Serfs, the suppressor of Poland, the war-maker against Turkey, the object of the Nihilists' bloodthirsty pursuit. But because he died a royal martyr, I may see him for the man he was, learn his little personal ways, look at what he carried in his pockets, know how simple a life he chose to live inside his outer shell of impenetrable pomp, and be permitted to discern how he worshipped the memory of his little dead child.

By more vivid means still, however, is the memory of Alexander II. nourished in St. Petersburg. In three places is his actual shed blood to be seen. As I stood by his bed, my own guide, taking advantage of the old official's back being turned, lifted the coverlet and pointed silently to the broad rusty stain upon the faded linen. The act was an offence, and I reproved him sharply. Again, in a glass case by the altar of the Cathedral of the Transfiguration is the uniform Alexander wore upon the

day of his death, and the scabbard of his sword bears a wide splash of rusty red. Finally, the very paving-stones and soil upon which his torn body lay and bled have been preserved and will remain for ever in the gorgeous Memorial Church of the Resurrection, built over them. His descendants have indeed determined that here, too, the populace, as Antony would have it do in Rome, shall mark the blood of Cæsar.

Far more than churches and palaces and fortresses, the little daily habits of a people, the commonplaces of their life, tell of their character and predict their future. Here, then, are a few commonplaces of the Russian capital—trifles too often beneath the notice of stately chroniclers.

What strikes the visitor first in St. Petersburg? The gentle manners of the police. The very name of the Russian police suggests terror to the Western ear—men haled from their beds, midnight trials, dungeons, all the familiar setting of the melodrama. The Russian street police, at any rate, are the antithesis of this. One of them, looking like a soldier because of his military uniform, sabre, and, at night, revolver, stands at every crossing and at every hundred yards in the busy thoroughfares. He directs the traffic like his London brother in blue; like him, he is angry when a vehicle takes the wrong side. When a cart comes along with the driver in a half-drunken sleep from too much vodka, the policeman pulls him off and sets him to walking by his team. He directs lost wayfarers, he helps in any accident, he reads Russian addresses for me and tells me where to find them, and all with perfect good temper and unruffled calm. So far as one can judge from externals he is a model policeman. And, as a matter of fact, it is not this *gorodovoi* who does the mysterious and despotic work of which the Western world hears so much. He cannot arrest you without a warrant; he cannot conceal from you of what you are accused; he cannot expel you from the city at his pleasure. That is the work of another branch of the police, whose story is too long to be told here.

The next thing that catches the eye of the stranger is the universal custom, except in the case of the most expensive shops, of decorating the outside with pictures of everything sold within. The tailor's shop has elaborate pictures of coats and trousers, the ironmonger depicts saws and pincers and hammers and locks, the fruiterer every kind of fruit, the provision merchant bread and sausages and cheese. Why? Partly, of course, like all advertisements, to catch the eye, but chiefly because the majority of potential customers cannot read, and would not know what the shopkeeper offered if he did not tell them pictorially. This is a trifle, but it is a significant one.

The costliness of Russian life is also a curious revelation. Russia contains probably a larger proportion of very poor people than any country except China, yet St. Petersburg is the most expensive city I have ever visited. To begin with, every house and hotel contains a swarm of servants, and each one expects a tip. The man who takes your hat and coat at a private house thinks fivepence little enough; if you give half-a-crown to the attendant who performs the same modest service for you at a great official's he shows no signs of excessive gratitude. The tips of a wealthy Russian to a waiter at a good restaurant are enormous. At the Hôtel d'Europe, where I made the mistake of stopping on my first visit, a room on the third floor costs thirteen shillings a day, and a closed carriage to take you to dinner ten minutes' drive away cannot be had for less than twenty-six shillings. Similarly you find sixpence charged on the bill for a few sheets of hotel note-paper of the cheapest kind, and a bath costs three-and-sixpence. A fortune awaits the man who will "run" an hotel in St. Petersburg on modern lines, where, if you pay high, at least you will get comfort and attention, without miserable extortions. Meanwhile, the home-like old Hôtel de France is where you find *tout Pétersbourg*.

One expects to find Russia overrun with soldiers, her capital like Berlin for its masses of troops, but more so. Yet if you

chance to see the guard marching up the Embankment to the Bank of England, and a troop of horse-guards riding up St. James's Street, you have possibly seen more soldiers any day in London than in St. Petersburg. There are innumerable officers about, but the private soldier is almost an uncommon figure. And at first you take for officers scores of men who are nothing of the kind. For nine-tenths of the middle classes wear a uniform. Uniform, in fact, is the Russian's passion; it stamps him as a member of the governing class. To be a plain civilian is to be nothing. To begin with, there, is, of course, the almost infinite variety of military and naval uniforms; then all the police and gendarmes; then all the officials connected in any way with the Court; then every individual, from the station-master to the window-cleaner, who has to do with the railways; then all the *dvorniks*, or porters who do police duty day and night outside every house; then the postmen, the tramway men and the street-cleaners. Any of these may be taken for a soldier by the ignorant visitor. But there is another huge class, or series of classes, which wears uniform in Russia. The nobility has its uniform, but is the only class which, possessing one, does not usually wear it. Every student of the University wears a military uniform, and every boy at school, down to the youngsters as high as your walking-stick. Every graduate of a technical school —mining engineers, civil engineers, architects, &c.—has the right, which he generally exercises, to wear a uniform for the rest of his life. Every member of all the public offices has a uniform. Since such an astonishing proportion of the well-to-do population is thus attired more or less like a soldier, it is easy to understand how it comes to be so undignified to be in civil dress. Of course, nobody living—except perhaps a tailor or two—knows all these uniforms and what they mean. A dozen times I have asked an educated Russian companion what a certain uniform denoted, and he confessed he had not the least notion. But to the wearers they mean a little authority, a little more touching

THE MINISTRY OF WAR, ST. PETERSBURG

of the cap, the excuse for a more commanding accent. And to the foreigner they mean two things : first, an officialdom which both indicates and explains so great a lack of private initiative ; and second, a ceaseless source of embarrassment, from the danger of exhibiting your railway ticket to a major-general, or making your most deferential bow to the guard.

St. Petersburg is the only city I have seen apparently without such a thing as a place where alcoholic drinks alone are sold. In a restaurant you can order a glass of beer or of vodka, but the "bar" or the public-house or the American "saloon" is non-existent. The only exception I saw was an "automatic buffet" where you get any drink on the penny-in-the-slot principle. It was enormously popular, but it also sold excellent food automatically, and called itself "Quisisana." (I puzzled over this name a long time until it occurred to me to divide it into three Italian words.) In a shop, however, where cigarettes and liquors are sold I have several times seen poor children come with an empty bottle, place a few coppers on the counter and take vodka home. The consumption of alcohol in Russia is comparatively small per head, but there is a good deal of drunkenness—much more in public than in other countries. The Russian is by nature a genial and company-loving man, and on religious holidays and public fêtes these virtues are his undoing. The well-to-do Russian has a peculiar passion in connection with his meals—namely, to hear the music of a huge "orchestrion" or mechanical organ, with drums, cymbals, and every imaginable instrument. No self-respecting restaurant is without one of these monstrous and costly erections, wound by hand or moved by electricity, and they play with the briefest intermissions the whole day. With one exception, all that I heard needed tuning, and dinner—even when it is so excellent as Russian food in good restaurants always is—under such conditions is apt to be indigestible.

Two more quaint little details. Nobody in Russia wears woollen underclothing—always linen or cotton. Moreover, the

foreigner who brings the underclothing he wears at home in winter, because Russia is a very cold country, is sorry somebody did not condescend to tell him this fact before. The explanation is simple : indoors it is always hot, and out of doors the Russian never ventures, even in a mild autumn, without an overcoat. To wear thick woollen underclothing you must keep your houses cool. The other detail is that in this country where everything is strictly prescribed by law, you make your bargain with a cab for every journey according to distance, weather, the quality of the vehicle, and the necessity of the driver. At the hotel door or in front of the cab-rank you call out the place to which you wish to be driven, and the drivers shout back what they will take. If you are a foreigner, they begin by demanding ten times what they will take ; if you are a Russian, twice the proper sum. Several minutes of oriental bargaining are a necessary preliminary to a five minutes' drive. In St. Petersburg the police invented a table of fares and had it affixed, as in England, to every cab, but the drivers repudiated it, and after several months it has become a dead letter. The *isvostchik* alone has vanquished autocracy.

But no matter how many new things, big and little, have impressed themselves upon you in the political capital of Russia, one, as you look back, outweighs all the rest. It is the one which caused even Voltaire to say, "Peter was born, and Russia was formed." Not in name only, but in real fact, is Petersburg the City of Peter. In his dark cathedral, amid surrendered keys and captured flags, he sleeps for ever, but his monument is all around him, and everything bears eloquent testimony to his marvellous prevision. Every site seems to have been chosen by him—every need of the Russia of to-day to have been anticipated by him. Still, in all your wonder at his foresight and his energy, you cannot live long in St. Petersburg without coming to the conclusion that he made one mistake—in building the city at all. His window toward Europe should have been in another part of the great Russian wall.

CHAPTER II

THE TWO MOSCOWS, AND A FEW REFLECTIONS

ST. PETERSBURG might be anywhere, and without turning one's self into a guide-book (precisely what I wish to avoid) there is hardly anything in it to describe. My impressions of it have only covered a few pages; but it would be easy to write a volume about Moscow. Here is Russia indeed—every side of her faithfully represented. The magnificent white railway station, with "God save the Tsar" in permanent gas-letters over the portal, is where the Great Siberian train starts for Vladivostok and Port Arthur. These strange, dark-robed men, sitting by themselves at the bourse, turbaned or fur-hatted, are Russian subjects from Central Asia. Russia is a great manufacturing country now; Moscow is one of the manufacturing cities of the world. Napoleon looms large in Russian history: from those low hills a few miles away he looked down upon the splendid prey he was about to seize; through this gate he entered

GATE AND CHAPEL OF THE OLD CITY, MOSCOW

the citadel; in that church his horses were stabled. A Romanoff Tsar rules Russia; this is the house where the first Romanoff to become a Tsar lived, as a simple seigneur; and here are the tombs of all the Ruriks and Romanoffs who ruled when St. Petersburg was a swamp. Russia is a theocracy; Moscow is the holy city, consecrated and consecrating. Under whatever aspect Russia of to-day presents herself to you, in Moscow you may find it embodied, for Russia sprang from Moscow and the Dukes of Muscovy laid her foundation-stones.

Since the Coronation of 1894 everybody has read of the wonderful churches of Moscow, of its brilliant colouring, of its historic interest, of the piety of its people. Yet I cannot refrain from dwelling for a moment on this, for Moscow produces a unique and an ineffaceable impression. There is no city in the world like it. The Imperial City in the centre of Peking, seen from the walls where Marco Polo's instruments stood until the Germans purloined them, has something of its blue and green and gold. Its fantastic architecture recalls the eaves and the watch-towers of Korea. Its narrow Eastern streets remind one of Sarajevo. Its holy images, literally innumerable, and the pious passer, elaborately bowing and crossing himself again and again, suggest Lourdes at pilgrimage time. Its streets paved with cobble-stones as big as your fist, over which the droschkies rattle and bang till your ears are deaf and your throat is sore, bring back to memory Belgrad, the worst-paved town in the world, where you may quite well fracture your skull in a drive down the main street in a closed carriage. But as a whole Moscow is like nothing but Moscow—a city apart, exempt from comparison, beyond description.

The second capital of Russia has a population of a million, it is the commercial centre, and the greatest Russian manufacturing town, and it has four hundred and fifty churches; but to the visitor Moscow is the Kremlin, and the Kremlin is Moscow. The remaining forty-nine fiftieths of the city do not count. The learned have not yet agreed what "Kremlin" means—probably

fortress, or Acropolis, or central official quarter, for many other towns have one. Actually it is an isosceles triangle, one side resting upon the river Moskva, and all three marked by enormous pyramidal walls of pale pink brick, broken at intervals by square watch-towers, and pierced by five gates. One of these leads from the river—a prison or secret gate—and everybody who passes

A GATE OF THE OLD CITY, MOSCOW

under another, the Gate of the Redeemer, so called from the miracle-working portrait over it, must remove his hat. The best view is from the Kamenny Bridge, and is shown in my photograph. Without colour, however, the Kremlin loses half its charm.

A Russian wit has said that Moscow is remarkable for two things—a cannon which has never been fired, and a bell which has never been tolled. And these are perhaps the two most striking single objects. On the way through the Kremlin, you pass in the arsenal yard an enormous quantity of bronze cannon,

neatly disposed in groups. Towering above them is the "Tsar Cannon," a huge and highly decorated piece of bright green bronze, weighing forty tons, with a bore of eighteen inches, cast in 1586. It is merely decorative, for a hatful of powder would blow it to bits. A hundred yards farther on is a colossal bell on the ground, weighing 200 tons. While it was being raised to the tower in 1737 it was broken, and the eleven-ton piece knocked out of it lies by its side. These cannon remind me of a significant little incident. As everybody knows, Napoleon brought 800 cannon into Russia with him, and took nine out again. Of the remainder, 365 are here, together with many more from Austria and Prussia and Italy and other enemies. In a glass frame is a brass tablet telling this proud story. We stopped to read it—a party of four, including a guide—when instantly a sentry ran up with fixed bayonet and sharply ordered us to move on. Gatherings in the street are not permitted in Russia. He was, of course, an ignorant man, too zealously executing orders he did not understand, but the incident tells its story. There is also something peculiarly absurd in visitors being forbidden to read a tablet set up in a public place to tell of Russian victories.

Moscow is, of course, redolent of Napoleon's gigantic failure. Three hours' drive from the city are the Sparrow Hills, from which he obtained his first view of the splendid pillage that awaited his impatient legions. If Moscow eighty-seven years ago looked from those hills as it looks to-day, his heart, sated as it was with conquest, must have beat high. Through the Troitski Gate of the Kremlin he entered next day. In this tiny Byzantine arch-roofed room of the old palace he slept. One day later he climbed this narrow winding stair to this little balcony to watch Moscow burning. By this Red Staircase he led his glittering Marshals into the Palace. In this Church of the Saviour the forage of his cavalry was stored above the relics of the first Christian martyr in Russia. And from here to the frontier stretches the long narrow cemetery of his troops.

The whole Kremlin is wonderfully picturesque. Its broad castellated brick walls are pierced by deep arched gateways and crowned by quaint towers whose red sides and green-tiled roofs emerge from masses of foliage. High above all is the tower of Ivan Veliki (an Englishman, by name John Villiers), from which

WOMEN IN THE SUNDAY MARKET, MOSCOW

the whole city is spread out before you like the illuminated page of some old missal. Here is a glimpse of the garden of a monastery which once boasted 16,000 servants, pretty red balconies running round a square of embowered walks. A few steps away is the never-to-be-forgotten Cathedral of the Assumption, in shape as its original was built six centuries ago, dazzling with gold, frescoed from floor to cupola, claiming upon its highest altar a piece of the Saviour's robe, the spot where a man crowns himself Tsar of All the Russias, and, in the eyes and in the profoundest convictions of a hundred millions of his subjects, rises thereby

to something of the Divinity he invokes. It is an area of infinite interest, and he must be dull indeed who is not brought to a standstill more than once by the pressure of his own reflections. My object here, however, is not to re-describe well-known sights and places, but to seek, in both familiar and unfamiliar scenes, the underlying facts and motives and meanings which go to make the Russia of to-day, and from which the Russia of to-morrow may be inferred. Therefore I leave the Kremlin and old Moscow to the guide-books and many previous travellers.

To most people, even well-travelled and well-read people, Moscow is only the quaint old capital of a picturesque and mysterious faith—the Holy City of Russia, where Tsars are made. It is this, but it is also something very different, which the Western World has not yet begun to appreciate. It is a great manufacturing city, the focus of a national industrial development already beginning to influence the markets of the world and destined some day to affect the fate of nations. We have glanced at Old Moscow, but New Moscow means cotton-spinning mills which have paid seventy or eighty per cent. It is an extraordinary —a startling juxtaposition, but the one thing is not less real than the other. In manufacture, as well as in history and religious tradition, Moscow is the heart of Russia. The old quarter, inside the walls, known as the "Chinese Town"—the only Chinese in it are a few tea merchants—is packed close with business offices and banks. The streets hum with the steps of hurrying buyers and sellers. At noon the Exchange is crowded with brokers and merchants, a remarkable proportion of them speaking German, with a sprinkling of Chinese, Persians, and strange faces and headgear from Turkestan. When you drive out to stand with Napoleon's ghost on the hills outside, a walled monastery, brilliant in colour, quaint in architecture, thrilling in story, lies midway between you and the city. By its side is a great factory, with huge disfiguring chimneys. All around Moscow, at distances varying from two to six hours by train, are great spinning and weaving

and cotton-printing mills. Spinning in Russia has advanced with astonishing strides. In 1886 there were already over two million

THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. BASIL THE BEATIFIED, MOSCOW—SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Napoleon ordered his soldiers to "destroy that Mosque," but they used it as a cavalry stable instead

spindles in the Moscow district, and as many more in other places.* From 1880 to 1889 the output of the cotton manu-

* An official statement for 1893, the latest I can find, says: "At the present time the number of spindles in Russia may be estimated at 6,000,000, and the number of looms at 200,000, taking 300 days per annum of ten working hours."

facturing industry rose from 240 to 487 millions of roubles. Since then the production has steadily risen, though not of course at this astonishing rate. The demand for cotton goods is practically unlimited, for the entire population of Russia wears it, while new markets in Central Asia and the Far East are opening rapidly. These Eastern markets are due to the sagacious character of Russian foreign policy, but the supply has of course grown up within the industrial paradise of an absolutely prohibitive tariff.

Not long ago in Moscow there were English foremen in most mills. Now almost all of these are gone. They were the objects of great jealousy, and their nationality had this disadvantage, that when trouble arose with the workmen, the immediate object of the hostility of the latter was their direct chief, and the situation became much more complicated if he happened to be a foreigner. Such troubles are by no means rare, and in one of them an Englishman was killed a few years ago. Indeed, among the subjects of official consideration in Russia to-day the familiar one of the relations of capital and labour is assuming an ever more perplexing, not to say disquieting, aspect. From the mill-owners' point of view the most difficult problem, however, is that of fuel. Hitherto wood has been chiefly used, but its price is growing prohibitive. Already it costs £3 or more for four tons, and it does not go half as far as good coal. English coal is costly, coal from the Donetz district in the south has to bear 800 miles of railway transport, and naphtha residues, which are so largely employed for all kinds of steam-raising, are rising steadily in price. Official comfort is given by the statement that coal will probably be found under the Moscow district itself, but meanwhile the cost of fuel, and therefore of power, stands in the way of many a new industrial enterprise.

One other matter in connection with cotton in Russia deserves mention. Most of the raw material comes from America, and a considerable quantity from Egypt. But in Turkestan, Russia has come into possession of a cotton-growing country of great

possibilities. Last year, a Moscow merchant told me, 350,000 American bales came from there, and this, it must be remembered, is favoured by escaping the heavy duty which foreign cotton has to pay. An official publication before me contains this statement: "In the near future probably the greater part of the Russian cotton industry will be supplied with native raw material."

THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW, FROM THE KAMENNY BRIDGE

But as all the cotton of Turkestan is dependent upon irrigation, and capital is scarce there, the Moscow spinners do not yet share this optimistic hope. Meanwhile, here is a little story, which may interest Lancashire. A prominent and wealthy Moscow producer of cotton goods is exhibiting, with ostensible indignation, but really with much natural pride, a piece bearing an exact imitation of his own trade-mark. His name is slightly altered, but the rest, including his many medals from exhibitions, with his name correctly spelled upon them, is there. This piece was manu-

factured in England and sent to him by his agent in Persia. So, at least, everybody says. I did not succeed in seeing it.

There is nothing so interesting in Russia at this moment as the industrial development which has already gone so far, and is without doubt going so much farther. It is a momentous development. Russia, with great aggregations of capital in middle-class hands, alongside an impoverished nobility; Russia, with her fields, like our own, depleted of labour, which has gone to the factories and the towns; Russia, with the character of her masses, upon whom alone rests the mighty and complicated fabric of her Church and State, essentially changed; Russia, with her colossal mineral wealth in full exploitation; Russia, ever more nearly self-sufficing and more independent of the Western World; Russia, pushing her railways, building her factories and opening her mines right out into the heart of China and the centre of Central Asia, while she is deliberately ringing India round with her net of railways—this is the Russia of the future brought to mind by a few days spent among the merchant princes of Moscow.

The Russian has an affection for things which are new, therefore when he enters the great Square of the Kremlin his enthusiasm vents itself upon the gorgeous green and gold memorial of Alexander III. The foreigner, on the other hand, though he is charmed with the towers on the wall embowered in trees, delighted with the quaint monastery and the nunnery where the Tsaritsas are buried, dazzled by the treasury, and duly impressed by the Great Palace, is not halted by emotion until he finds himself in the painted gloom and amid the buried patriarchs of the little Cathedral of the Assumption, "fraught with recollections, teeming with worshippers, bursting with tombs and pictures from pavement to cupola," as Dean Stanley said. But his emotion is not for these. Then it is because the Tsar is crowned amid these "infinite riches in a little room"? Not at all. It is because the Tsar crowns himself there. He is so incomparably greater

THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW

than all other men that nobody but himself can hallow and ordain him King. So exalted and remote and sacred is he that not even the chief servant of God is high enough to place the crown upon his brow. Therefore, in the holiest spot of the Holy City, amid all the pomp of the living and all the solemnity of the dead, surrounded by the royalty of the world, while bells clash and cannon roar and multitudes throng without, the hereditary heir of the Romanoffs—though but a trace of real Romanoff blood is left—crowns and consecrates himself Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias, and—for the whole list is well worth recalling—of Moscow, of Kiev, of Vladimir, of Novgorod; Tsar of Kazan, of Astrakhan, of Poland, of Siberia, of Kherson-Taurida, of Grusi; Gosudar of Pskov; Grand Duke of Smolensk, of Lithuania, of Volynia, of Podolia and of Finland; Prince of Esthonia, of Libonia, of Kurland; of Semigalia, of the Samoyeds, of Bielostok, of Korelia, of Foer, of Ingor, of Perm, of Viatka, of Bulgaria, and of other countries; Master and Grand Duke of the Lower Countries in Novgorod, of Tchernigov, of Riazan, of Polotsk, of Rostov, of Yaroslav, of Vieloselsk, of Udork, of Obodsk, of Kondisk, of Vitelsk, of Mstilav, and of all the countries of the North; Master Absolute of Iversk, of Kastalnisk, of Kabardinsk, and of the territory of Armenia; Sovereign of the Mountain Princes of Tcherkask; Master of Turkestan, Heir Presumptive of Norway, and Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, of Stormarne, of Dithmarschen, and of Oldenburg. And it is sober truth, as I have said, that to the majority of the people who live in these places the man who thus crowns himself in the House of God becomes thereby something more than human—a semi-divine person. One is reminded of the vigil of Festus:

> —those bright forms
> We clothe with purple, crown, and call to thrones,
> Are human, but not his; those are but men
> Whom other men press round and kneel before—
> Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind;

Higher provision is for him you seek
Amid our pomp and glories: see it here!
Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise thee, clay!

There is nothing like it in the world; probably no such claim has ever been put forth elsewhere as is regularly made in this church when Tsar succeeds Tsar—certainly no such claim has ever been so widely and so sincerely allowed. And to understand Russia it is absolutely necessary to appreciate this fact. Unless you realise that in Russia the Tsar is everything, literally everything; that not only is his will law but that it is also heaven-inspired right; that his land and his subjects are his to dispose of wholly as he will—I am speaking, of course, of the masses of the people—you will not grasp the fundamental condition of Russia to-day. A well-known story tells that in a Russian battle not so long ago, the artillery, urgently needed in front to save the day, was stopped by a deep ditch. The soldiers thereupon flung themselves in until the ditch was full, and the artillery galloped over their bodies. The incident, whether fact or fiction, illustrates the relation of the common people of Russia to their Sovereign. As you go higher in the scale the fact remains, but on a different basis. Official rank—*tchin*—is the standard of position—a greater or less *tchin* determines a man's honour and influence, and of course all conceivable *tchin* culminates in the Tsar. If you have not yourself a high *tchin*, you must be "protected" by somebody who has. Officials of high rank will hardly deign to notice you at one minute, and the next they are wholly at your service, if they have learned that you are well "protected." And in the highest society of all, whatever views it may privately hold and express, the Tsar, as the source of promotion and the fountain of honours and emoluments, dwells alone upon the heights.

In material things it is the same. I was once discussing with a Russian administrator the military capabilities of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and I remarked that there would not be rolling-stock enough to convey masses of troops in a short time. "Every

H.M. THE TSAR AT THE MANŒUVRES

engine and carriage in Russia would be put there if necessary," was the reply. "But," I objected, "that would disorganise the whole commerce of the country, and bring tens of thousands to ruin." "You don't understand," answered this official; "if the

THE KREMLIN SQUARE AND MEMORIAL OF ALEXANDER III., MOSCOW

Tsar gave the word to take every railway carriage in Russia and run it across the Siberian Railway and throw it into the China Sea at the other end, who, I should like to know, would prevent it?"* The influence of the throne is increasing rather than diminishing, for I heard many complaints from educated Rus-

* "To a Russian no obstacle is unsurmountable when his Tsar commands." M. de Witte, in his Report to H. M. the Emperor on the Budget of the Empire for 1900,

sians that certain Ministers of State were taking their proposals direct to the Tsar, whose signature made them irrevocably law, instead of submitting them first, as is customary, to the Council of Ministers. The Tsar himself determined to build the Trans-Siberian Railway ; it will cost a hundred millions sterling. Tradition alone is more powerful than autocracy ; if it were not, the world would have even greater reason to admire the aspirations of Nicholas II. A Tsar cannot command a policy which no Minister will undertake to carry out ; he is unable to control and helpless to set aside a mass of statistics or unfavourable information which they lay before him. Sometimes, as in the case of Alexander III., he is deliberately overwhelmed with details in order that he may not espouse principles. Thus a Tsar might possibly not be able to preserve peace against all the facts and warnings and arguments brought to bear upon him. But he could declare war, by a word, at any time. And it is to the everlasting honour of Alexander III. that he set his face so steadfastly against war, waged either by himself or by others, and of Nicholas II., that his first great act should be to call a Conference of Peace, although some of his Ministers, both by private word and official deed, made it almost a mockery.

From ruler to ruled is a natural transition, and especially so in Russia, where there is no middle class in which the two qualities coalesce. Indeed this is the most striking aspect of Russian society : at the top, the Imperial family, surrounded by the nobility ; at the bottom, the "common people." Russian life abounds in incidents which illustrate a personal sympathy between high and low existing in no other society. I read, for instance, that one day a miserably ragged man begged an alms at a railway station from a prosperous-looking passenger. At that moment a General—and it must be remembered that in Russia a General is a very great personage—with his pretty young wife came upon the platform. "I will give you five roubles," said the man heartlessly, "if you will kiss the General's wife." The beg-

gar went straight to the lady, fell upon his knees, and told her of his plight. She listened, and then, getting her husband's permission, held out her cheek for him to kiss. The *Novoye Vremya*, which told the story, added truly that such magnanimity could only occur in Russia. One day I remarked to a Russian friend with whom I was dining what an excellent servant he had. "Yes," he said, "and there is also something remarkable about him that you don't see. That man has been kissed by a Tsar." "When—why?" I asked in astonishment. "Some years ago," replied my friend, "he was on sentry duty in the garden of an Imperial palace, and in the early Easter morning the Emperor came out alone. '*Voskress Christos!*'—'Christ is risen!' said the sentry, as custom prescribes, and it is also prescribed that you shall salute with a kiss the first person who tells you the good news. Such customs in Russia are binding upon Emperor and peasant alike." It was a charming story, and well illustrates the comparative nearness of top and bottom in Russian life.

The development of industrialism with its rapidly made fortunes is changing this condition so far as the large towns are concerned, but it still remains true of the country as a whole. What impressions of the Russian people does one gather from several months' travel through the whole empire—a journey of twenty thousand miles? The first thing that attracts your attention in the two capitals themselves, is the curious detail I have already mentioned, namely, that the shops which offer wares to the people do so, not in words, as with us, but with pictures. I noticed the same thing later in going over barracks. In one large frame, for instance, is a series of "penny dreadful" pictures, showing all the duties of a sentry—what the good sentry does if a fire breaks out, if a burglar is seen entering a house, if a citizen is attacked, if a sportsman comes shooting birds near a powder-magazine, and so on. Very few of the soldiers can read,* and this

* The official report for 1896 showed that out of every 100 recruits an average of 28.4 could write, and 71.6 could not write.

RUSSIAN PEASANT

is the only way to impart information. In a class-room at another barracks was a schoolmaster teaching the letters of the alphabet on a blackboard to a large number of men. "This is the class for me to join," I remarked, to the great glee of these good-tempered grown-up children.

The Russian people, then, is illiterate, in the strict sense of the word. And millions upon millions of people who read no books and no newspapers, write and receive no letters, must inevitably be the helpless victims of superstition and prejudice. This is, of course, the fact. Russia is the home of more religious manias and crazy notions than could be enumerated. Not a month passes without some almost incredible instance of religious fanaticism. The end of the world is a constantly recurring belief. The horrible *skoptsi*, whose practices one cannot more nearly describe

RUSSIAN PEASANT

than by saying that they carry out literally the exhortation, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out," are represented all over Russia, and in spite of the severest measures the police cannot stop their abominable propaganda. It is natural to the Russian peasant to take the scripture literally. In May of this year a man named Ivan Plotnikof of Bielovodsk, in the government of Kharkov, begged a book to teach him to "live in truth." He was given a Gospel, read Mark v. 29, and was admitted to the hospital, having chopped his hand off with an axe, after failing to gouge out his eye. The Dukhobortsi, too, the superior peasants who left Russia, largely with Tolstoy's help, rather than perform military service, found the laws of Canada as contrary to their peculiar tenets as those of Russia. The Government allotment of land, a correspondent wrote, was opposed to their conviction that all land should belong to the community. They refuse to accept the marriage law, claiming that the only proper marriage is that brought about by mutual moral affection, and they cannot consent to recognise the right of authorities to regulate such matters. The divorce law also conflicts with their idea of free love. If parties find their union not contracted through the pure feeling of love, they have the right, it is urged, to divorce themselves. And the registration of births and deaths is objected to, because God knows all about them. The Russian authorities are entitled to more sympathy than they receive, considering what strange millions they have to deal with. A friend told me of a travelling impostor he had seen, who went from village to village offering, for a small fee, to show some hairs from the head of the Virgin Mary. One person at a time was admitted, a small parcel was produced and many wrappings taken off in succession, until in the last paper of all the visitor was invited to gaze upon the miraculous hairs. The paper was quite empty and the peasant would aver that he saw nothing. Then the impostor would sorrowfully explain that the hairs were invisible to sinful eyes, and that only the pious could see them. In order to escape the

reproach, his customers would loudly and proudly assert that they saw them clearly, and so he did a brisk trade. The Russian Government is anxious to change its old Gregorian Calendar to that of the rest of the world (the Russian date is now thirteen days behind our own), but it cannot do so, because the peasants would be furious if the favourite saints were robbed of their proper birthdays. Sunday, by the way, is a person to the Russian lower classes.

Poverty and illiteracy naturally go hand in hand. In no other great country of the world is poverty—monotonous, resigned poverty—to so great an extent the national characteristic of the people. The only parallels I know are in some of the Balkan States. At almost any point in rural Russia you might think yourself in the interior of Servia or Bulgaria, except that even in these countries the poor peasant seems not quite so poor, and his bearing is more independent. Long train journeys in Russia are depressing experiences. Once past the limits of the towns, every village is the same—a wide street or two—not really streets, of course, but deep dust or mud, or snow, according to the season, and from a score to a couple of hundred grey, one-storey wooden houses, usually dilapidated, and a church. Russia is still first and foremost an agricultural country; she produces (including Poland) two thousand million bushels of grain, and grain products form more than half her total exports to Europe; therefore at the right season there are great stretches of waving fields, and later the huge mounds of straw, whence the grain has been threshed. But it is in her most fertile districts that the worst famines occur, for famine—a little one every year, a big one every seven years—has now become a regular occurrence. And the country, as one flies across it, leaves the general impression of indigence. In sharp and painful contrast with Western Europe, there are virtually no fat stack-yards, no cosy farm-house, no château of the local land-owner, no squire's hall—merely assemblages of men and women just on the hither side of the starvation line. And, from all one learns, disease is rife. Whole villages, I was told by men who knew them well, are poisoned

T.M. THE TSAR AND TSARITSA—EASTER IN MOSCOW

with syphilis, and the authorities, gravely alarmed at this terrible state of things, have appointed of late several commissions of inquiry to devise remedial measures. Drunkenness, too, is a national vice, the peasant having his regular bout whenever he has saved up a small sum, but the new government monopoly of the sale of vodka, which is gradually coming into force over the whole country, will, I believe, exert a beneficial influence in this matter, and much of the denunciation levelled at it is, in my opinion, unjust. The vast void spaces of rural Russia, by the way, may be imagined from the fact that every train carries a ladder and tools and electrical appliances for cutting the telegraph wire and calling for assistance in case of accident or breakdown. This happened to me on one occasion. The lines are, of course, nearly all single ones, so there is no opportunity to stop a train going in the opposite direction. Last winter successive trains were blocked by snow near Odessa, until several thousand passengers were snowed-up, almost without food, for three days, suffering terribly, and only released and provisioned at last by the efforts of two regiments and a hastily organised service of sledges. Between the towns in Russia, even on the main lines of railway, you are in a country almost untouched by the conveniences of modern civilisation.

BROKEN DOWN ON THE STEPPE—TAPPING THE TELEGRAPH FOR HELP

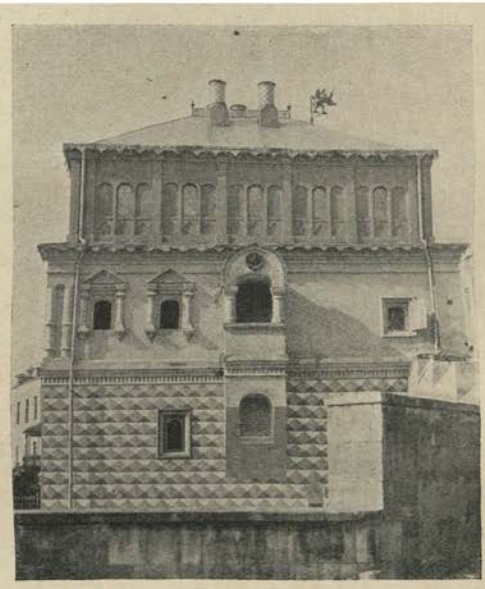
Personally, the Russian common people are attractive. They are simple, good-natured, kindly, very ready to be pleased or to

laugh. Nobody can fail to like them. Their poverty does not prevent them from being happy in their melancholy Slav fashion. They live in dirt and are inexpressibly verminous, yet they luxuriate regularly in the village vapour baths. Black rye bread, cabbage, buckwheat, mushrooms, eggs are the chief items of the *mujik's* fare. He is a fluent liar, generally from amiable motives. He is religious in every fibre of his being, but his religion is wholly of the letter; he is convinced that his priest has the evil eye; he gets wildly drunk at Easter for joy to think that Christ is risen, and at other times for no reason at all. The soldier, typical of his class, is a great child, and is treated as such. Nothing is left to his intelligence or his initiative. Of virtues he has many—he is brave, obedient, faithful; of wits he is not supposed or even desired to show any sign. The very words he is to say are put into his mouth. If an officer asks him a question that he cannot answer, he may not say, "I do not know"; he must reply, "I am not able to know." When his Colonel greets him collectively, he has one answer; when the Tsar greets him he has another—a whole sentence carefully learned by heart and shouted in unison by the whole regiment in a long series of explosive syllables. His pay is about 1*s.* 10*d.*—44 cents—every three months. From the point of view of the military martinet, he is ideal *Kanonen-futter—chair à canon.* To his number there is no limit.

To this general characterisation of the Russian populace I must add one important qualification. The extraordinary—the almost incredible—growth of industrialism in Russia is bringing about a great and vital change in the masses of the people. The peasant who works with hundreds or thousands of his fellows in a mill or factory soon becomes a different being from the peasant toiling on his bit of village land and migrating hither and thither, in seasons of agricultural work, for employment. This, to my thinking, is by far the most significant and important aspect of Russia of to-day, and I shall have more to say about it hereafter. I only desire here to make clear the two great

characteristics of the Russian social fabric, without an appreciation of which no Russian question or prospect can be intelligently judged—autocracy, the semi-divine, unquestioned, unbounded authority, at the top; its counterpart, illiterate, superstitious, brute-like dependence and automatonism, at the bottom.

I cannot help but turn back for a moment to Old Moscow, before leaving the two capitals of Russia, with their associations and suggestions. In a crowded street of banks and merchants' offices, in the "Chinese City"—all foreigners in Russia used to be called "Chinese," just as to-day they are called "Germans"—stands a little mediæval house, skilfully and sympathetically restored—the home of Michael, the first Tsar of Romanoff race. And within the Kremlin stands the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, the mausoleum of all the Ruriks and Romanoffs till Peter built his city on the Neva and laid him down for ever in its island fortress-church, to be followed by all the Tsars unto this day. In the one place you see the little, low, many-coloured rooms (much like the old royal apartments in the Kremlin palace), the narrow bed, the modest clothes-chest, the great wooden *kvass* bowl, the green leather boots with their pointed spur-heels, of Michael Romanoff; the night-dress and the needles and



THE HOME OF THE ROMANOFFS, MOSCOW

the flat-irons of his wife; the cradle and the playthings of his children. In the other place he lies beneath a wine-red velvet pall, and six-and-forty of his race, similarly habited for eternity, are his silent companions. When one thinks of what these Romanoffs were, what they are, what they desire to be, and what are the colossal and ever-growing forces they control, at the motion of a single will, to turn their all-embracing and fanatic desire into fact, I know of few more impressive spots on modern earth.

CHAPTER III

LEO, THE SON OF NICHOLAS

THE name of Moscow will always bring back to my mind, before anything else, my visit to Tolstoy. Indeed, he is as much a part of Russia, as significant of Russian character, as prophetic of Russian development, as the Kremlin itself. At the bottom of every Russian is a stratum of enthusiastic idealism, of disbelief in the thing that is and belief in the thing that may be. Scratch a Muscovite and you find a transcendentalist. Drop into conversation with your neighbour in the railway carriage and in ten minutes you will be disputing hotly over some purely abstract proposition, connected, nine times out of ten, with the possibility of a perfect social state. With us the classes of those who do things and those who dream them are sharply dissevered; the typical Russian is doer and dreamer in one, and Tolstoy is the dreamer incarnate in every Russian heart.

The guide-book describes Tula as the Russian Birmingham and Sheffield combined. Peter the Great filled it with his gunsmiths, and to-day, faithful to this tradition, it is the principal small-arms manufactory of the Empire. Moreover, since coal and iron have been discovered in the neighbourhood, it has taken on a new development, and is now a thriving and growing city. It was not small-arms, however, nor iron-works, that took me thither, but something the precise antithesis of these symptoms of modernity. For ten miles out of Tula lives Count Tolstoy, and I could not be within six hours by train of his home without making a pilgrimage to meet the man who is perhaps less of this Russian world than any other individual within its con-

fines, yet whose voice is regarded by the world outside as the most remarkable thing which Russia contains to-day. To my telegram requesting permission came the cordial but untranslatable words, *Milosti prosim*, and, leaving Moscow at night, at eight o'clock next morning I vainly endeavoured, in very broken Russian, to make an hotel-keeper and a droshky-driver understand who was meant by "Graf Tolstoy." To them "the great man is simply Leo, son of Nicholas, and remembering this patriarchal habit and "Lef Nikolaievitch," I was soon rattling over the cobble-stones of the long wide street on the way to Yasnaya Polyana, Count Tolstoy's world-famous estate.

After the misery of agricultural Russia between the frontier and the capital it was a relief to pass through a landscape showing good tillage, good roads and bridges, good flocks and herds, good crops, and afforestation. For part of the way we drove through dense forests of silver birch of perhaps twenty years' growth, soon to follow their predecessors into stove and furnace, but meanwhile of fairy-like beauty, with their spotted shining silver trunks and delicate golden foliage. Midway, at the foot of a valley, beside a railway and a river, rose an example of what is really to-day "New Russia"—a huge iron-works, with its unceasing din and its belching chimneys, its rows of little houses and its village of mud-roofed triangular dwellings. This belongs to a Belgian joint-stock company, and night and day, Sundays included, it has a thousand men at work—men who formerly tilled the sandy soil with careless hand and primitive implement. An ant-like stream of men pours across the road to the long barracks and the half-underground hovels where they live. They are not attractive men, either, and we are glad to be in the green country once more, with the quiet figures of browsing beasts, the rumble of springless carts jerking along, a peasant asleep, his boots dangling, on each one, the horses with bits beneath their chins, thoughtfully picking their way and giving elbow-room to passing vehicles. After about nine miles the driver turns

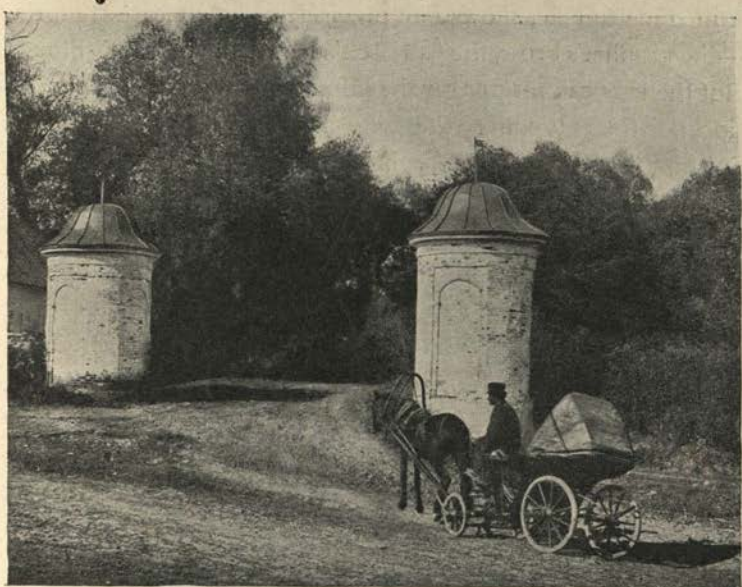
aside from the excellent main road, and for another mile the droshky rocks, like a ship hove-to in a sea-way, across grass fields, where cart-wheels have left foot-deep ruts in the recent rainy weather. There are signs of careful planting about us, and at last something which at home would be called a village green, and two little white-washed towers forming the end of an avenue of old birches. The birches are hoary as is their master's head, and great in stature even as himself, and their way winds upward, past an exquisite willow-grove by a lake, till it brings you in sight of a white low-spreading château, with iron roof painted green, like almost all roofs in Russia, close set round with trees.

Tolstoy works in his room till one o'clock, and nothing is ever allowed by his devoted family to disturb him. We are therefore led by a man-servant to a spacious upper room, where a long table, with a portly samovar at one end, and a row of chairs down each side, shows that wide and ever-ready hospitality is the rule of the household. There his youngest daughter charmingly entertains us for awhile, until his eldest daughter and daughter-in-law come to take us for a long walk round the farm and through the birch-woods.

It is not like the farms of England, still less like the West; it resembles more the neglected homesteads of New England. There are long, low wooden barns, a long stable and coach-house, and a fragrant apple-house, where tons of apples are being weighed and packed for the train. Outside the barn lie two wooden ploughs, primitive enough to have come from the depths of Asia. In the stable Miss Tolstoy unfastens the loose-box door of her own hack, and going outside calls to her. The mare trots out and follows her mistress about like a dog. Then I am shown what is called the "Clydesdale" stallion, and asked to explain his breed. In such an atmosphere even the innocent falsehood of politeness is impossible, and I am therefore compelled to say that the animal is just half the size he should be for the name he

bears. There is also a 13-hand wild white horse from the steppe, which is with difficulty persuaded by the incessant purring of the groom from showing us then and there how really wild he is. Count Tolstoy, notwithstanding his great age, finds perhaps his keenest pleasure in traversing the country at full gallop on this narrow steed. Then round the fields and through the woods and orchards we walk and talk. It is rather a dreary picture our hostess paints of this famous estate. The land brings in no revenue—no landowner in Russia, we are told, draws anything in the shape of rent from his estates. The peasants give service at sowing and harvest in return for their land, or a proportion of their crops where they do not give labour. But the crops are small, and are all consumed on the place. Moreover, it is growing ever more difficult to get labour at all. I ask why the land cannot be tilled with modern implements, fertilised with artificial manures, and the crops reaped with self-binders, and thus sold at a profit. I am told that it could not be done; but I cannot learn why. It would be contrary to Count Tolstoy's theories, strictly speaking, I know, but then so is apple-selling. For one thing, the iron-works have disorganised the district. The peasants tramp to the mill every day and work incredibly long hours for incredibly small pay; which, however, saved for a fortnight, enables them to indulge in bi-monthly orgies of vodka. And drink, as everywhere, breeds crime. It is no longer safe to be out after dark, and once Miss Tolstoy and a friend were pursued in their own woods by ruffians. This is the seamy side of Russia's industrial development. Estate by estate is passing out of the hands of those who inherited it from a long line of ancestors, into the possession of the rich merchants and manufacturers of the city, who are careless as to produce and seek only the social prestige that land alone gives in old countries. Miss Tolstoy is pessimistic this morning, for she goes on to say that even of these, the third generation is always ruined and has to begin again. "No Russian," she avers, "ever 'founds a family,' as you say.

A man makes a fortune, his son lavishes it, his grandson disperses it." In his youth, Tolstoy was a mad sportsman, from dawn to nightfall in the saddle, or with gun and hound. Then this estate was watched and cherished for the chase's sake; now he thinks of it but as an appanage of the people which he monopolises.



THE GATEWAY OF YASNAYA POLYANA

But here he comes, walking sturdily down the narrow woodway, his dog leaping joyously about him.

Count Tolstoy's face is as familiar as that of any crowned ruler of to-day. Everybody knows of his simple habits, his peasant's blouse, his avoidance of meat, wine and tobacco—in a word, of his practical embodiment of a curiously primitive form of Christian faith. But his appearance makes an impression no whit less keen because it is exactly what you have long known. He is seventy-two, and his broad strong face is deeply seamed,

his eyes see visions from far beneath heavy bushy brows, his beard is snow white. He wears a round soft felt cap, and a black blouse with a strap at the waist, and his shoes are in a strange state of dilapidation for the feet of a man who, by birth a nobleman, has become from conviction a shoemaker.

The photograph reproduced here, which he afterward permitted me to take, shows him precisely as he appeared that day —the prophet's brow, the patriarch's beard, the peasant's blouse. But the lens cannot portray the infinite sweetness of his expression, nor the pen convey the exceeding gentleness of his words. For him the law and the prophets, the ten commandments and the categorical imperative, are all comprised in the one word—Love. Who has it, has everything—religion, ethics, law, politics; who has it not, has nothing. "Write me as one who loved his fellow-men," would be also Tolstoy's request to the recording angel, if he were not far too modest to wish to be written down at all. And his devotion to the race marks his attitude to the individual. He greets you with genuine pleasure, he asks your opinion almost with deference, he considers your answer with respect. Your personality is evidently a thing he regards as sacred. You struggle in vain to reverse the relationship, but without much success, for his soul dwells apart and you cannot get on the same plane with him—there is so little common ground between you. To questions about matters of current interest, he often replies as a mathematician might reply to a question about the rotation of crops, and to my own commonplace questions, prompted by everyday life and mundane affairs, there come from the burning bush of his pure soul answers as incomprehensible as the commandments must have seemed to Moses. "Are you in sympathy," I asked, "with M. de Witte's policy of fostering by all means the industrial development of Russia, as against her agricultural development?" "I do not see," was the Delphic reply, "that it makes an engine work any better or worse if you paint it red or blue or green." It took me,

benighted recipient of an inspired message, several days to get down to the bed-rock meaning of this ethical conundrum. When

COUNT TOLSTOY AT HOME

I did, I saw that, like all Tolstoy's utterances, it led straight back to the single primal principle which for him sums up Christ's

teaching, and offers the one and only cure for the ills of mankind. But I ran him to earth, so to speak, over the Dreyfus case, at that moment being reheard at Rennes. His attitude in this matter was that of a believer in the "secret *dossier*," a defender of the General Staff, accepting the guilt of Dreyfus as an easier alternative than the conspiracy of his fellow-officers against him. "The people are hypnotised," he said; "they know nothing and they all shout the same thing. After all, why should I concern myself with Dreyfus—are there no innocent men in the prison of Tula?" *

In truth, Count Tolstoy lives in a world of his own—a world, however, into which many thousands of Russians, following either him or Sutayef, have also entered. He sees current affairs from afar off. "Tell me," he said, as we sat over coffee after lunch,

* The latest illustration of Count Tolstoy's intellectual remoteness from contemporary affairs is furnished by his reply to some questions addressed to him by the *Revue Blanche* of Paris. He says:

"My reply to your first question, as to what the Russian people thinks of the Franco-Russian Alliance, is this. The Russian people, the true Russian people, has not the smallest idea of its existence; but, if it were known to it, I am certain that, all peoples being equally indifferent to it, its common sense as well as its sentiment of humanity would show it that this exclusive alliance with one people in preference to any other can have no other object than to involve it in enmities and perhaps in wars: and on this account it would be in the highest degree displeasing to it.

"To the question whether the Russian people shares the enthusiasm of the French people I think I may reply that the Russian people not only does not share its enthusiasm—if such enthusiasm really exists, which I very much doubt—but that, if it knew all that is said and done in France with regard to this alliance, it would actually conceive a feeling of distrust and antipathy for a people which without any reason suddenly sets itself to profess a spontaneous and exceptional love for it.

"As to the third question—what is the effect of this alliance on civilisation in general? I think I am entitled to suppose that, *having no other possible motive than war or menace of war against other peoples*, its influence cannot but be mischievous. As for the effect of the alliance on the two nations which form it, it is clear that it has produced up to the present and can produce in the future nothing but the greatest mischief to the two peoples."

Of course the Russian people, the masses, know nothing whatever about the Dual Alliance, therefore the question was essentially a foolish one. But in describing it as a "menace of war against other peoples" Count Tolstoy diametrically mis-states both its motive and its effect. (See Chapter XXIV.) Such mundane matters cannot be criticised to any good purpose from the standpoint of spiritual intuition.

of the progress of Socialism in England." And his face clouded over when I told him that Socialism, at least under its own name, plays a far smaller part in English life than it did within my own recollection twenty years ago. "Then tell me," he continued, "what is being done in England about the 'single tax.'" And he was obviously deeply disappointed when I replied that nothing was being done about it at all. One trifling remark in our conversation interested him most. Looking at some carpenters at work, I happened to say that I try to do with my own hands all the carpentry on my farm. He at once came over to me to ask about it. And in the liking of one man for simple country life and manual labour he evidently thought he discovered a symptom of hope for the future of a nation. For thither runs his own ideal.

So far as the secular authorities are concerned, Tolstoy seems to bear a charmed life. The story about the Tsar meeting him at a railway station and holding a long conversation with him, was a pure invention. Indeed, when an important official from St. Petersburg came to Tula in the course of certain investigations, and desired to ask Tolstoy's advice, the latter refused to receive him. But except the suppression of some of his writings, the authorities leave Lef Nikolaievitch alone, though his views must seem to them the quintessence of subversive propagandism. "Three things I hate," he said to me: "autocracy, orthodoxy, and militarism," and these are the three pillars of the Russian State. I asked him point-blank, "How is it that the Government has never arrested or banished you?" "I cannot tell," he answered, and then, after a moment's pause he added, slowly, in a tone of much solemnity: "I wish they would. It would be a great joy to me." The general opinion among advanced Russians is that the police are restrained in this instance by the world-wide scandal that any harsh treatment of Tolstoy would cause. But I am inclined to think that Tolstoy's influence, which is probably greater out of Russia than in it, being almost confined to the

spiritual sphere, is not found running athwart the administration in practical life. How should it? Here, for example, is one of his proposals. "My land here," he said to me, when I pressed him for some immediate practical reform, "is worth to me, let us say, six roubles an acre a year. I would have the Government impose upon this land a tax of nine roubles. I could not pay it. Very well, let them take it away from me and give it in cultivation to peasant families in small quantities sufficient to

YASNAYA POLYANA, COUNT TOLSTOY'S HOME (FRONT)

support them. They could well pay the higher rate for it." Such views as this do not endanger the Russian social fabric.

For some unexplained reason, however, and by some extraordinary error of ecclesiastical tactics, the religious authorities suddenly excommunicated him in March of this year. I was told by Russians that the reason was the issue of flysheets at a kopeck apiece, containing his bitterest denunciations of the Orthodox Church, and the enormous circulation these were having among the people. In accordance with what he had said to me about secular prosecution, he remarked to a recent visitor, "The day of my excommunication was the happiest of my life." But this did not prevent him from striking back at once, in a

long letter addressed to the Holy Synod. The latter's decree, he declared, is illegal or intentionally ambiguous ; it is arbitrary, unjustifiable, and mendacious. Moreover, it contains a calumny and constitutes an incitement to wicked sentiments and acts. "I have not repudiated the Church," he added, "because I had revolted against the Lord. I repudiated it, on the contrary, because I wanted to serve God with all the force of my soul."

He admits that he denies the whole creed of Christianity

YASNAYA POLYANA, COUNT TOLSTOY'S HOME (BACK)

considered as theology—the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, &c., but he does not deny "God the spirit, a unique God of love, the principle of all things." He believes not in the Christian Heaven and Hell, but in the immortality of the soul and man's moral responsibility, and he writes long and eloquently of the God of love, whose will is that we should all live according to the law of love as the condition of bringing real brotherhood into a world torn by strife. "It may be," he says in conclusion, "that my beliefs offend, afflict, or scandalise some persons ; it may be that they disturb or displease ; but it is not in my power to change these beliefs any more than it is possible for me to change my body. I must live and

shall be obliged to die—and before long—yet all this interests only myself. I cannot believe otherwise than I do believe at the moment when I am preparing to return to this God from whom I came. I do not say that my faith has been the only incontestably true faith for all times, but I do not see any other simpler or clearer, none which responds better to the requirements of my mind and heart. If suddenly there should be revealed another faith, better capable of satisfying me, I would adopt it at once, for truth is the only thing that is of importance to God. As for returning to the doctrines from which I emancipated myself at the price of so much suffering, I cannot do so. The bird that has taken its flight can never return to the shell out of which it came." *

Before this, however, Countess Tolstoy had addressed to the Procurator of the Holy Synod a pathetic and passionate protest against the excommunication of her husband, which deserves quotation at length, if only to refute the statement so commonly made—in Russia, also—that she is without sympathy with his views. "I have read in the newspapers," she wrote, "the decree of the Holy Synod excommunicating my husband, Leo Nicholaievitch Tolstoy. This excommunication, countersigned by the Bishop of the Church, cannot leave me indifferent.

"My indignation and grief are immense. Not that my husband's spiritual death is entailed by that document. This is God's affair, not man's. From the religious standpoint the life of the soul remains an impenetrable mystery for each of us, and that life, thank Heaven, is dependent on no earthly power. But when I see this excommunication pronounced by the Church to which I belong and shall never cease to belong, which Christ has established in order that in God's name it should consecrate all the most solemn acts of man's life—birth, marriage, death—whose mission is to proclaim the law of charity, the law of pardon, the love of our enemies and of those who hate us, and whose prayers

* *The Times*, May 1, 1901.

are due to all, I am at a loss what to think. That excommunication will excite not the adhesion but the indignation of men, and will earn for Leo Tolstoy increased love and sympathy. We are already receiving the expression of these sentiments, and from all parts of the world it will long continue to reach us.

"Deep, too, is the pain caused me by another senseless measure recently adopted—the secret order by which the Holy Synod forbids priests in the event of Leo Nicholaievitch's death to bury him in church. Against whom is this blow directed? The dead, the insensible remains of the man, or his kindred, the believers surrounding him? If it is a threat, to whom is it addressed, against whom is it aimed? Is it really believed that I shall not find a priest to celebrate my husband's funeral service and pray for him in church—a good priest who in the presence of the true God of love disregards the commands of men, or a bad priest whom an offer of money would place at my disposal? But even this is not necessary. For me the Church is an abstraction, and I do not acknowledge other ministers than those who comprehend what it really is. Were it necessary to believe that the Church is merely the congregation of men who out of malice do not hesitate to violate Christ's highest command, the law of love, we should long ago have left it, all of us who are faithful to it and observe its laws. And the renegades are not those who go astray in search of truth, but those who, placed by their very pride at the head of the Church and unfaithful to the law of love, humility, and mercy, act as spiritual hangmen. God will be lenient to those who even outside the Church have lived a life of humility, renunciation of the good things of this world, love, and devotion. His pardon is surer for them than for those whose mitres and decorations sparkle with precious stones, but who strike and expel from the Church those over whom they are set as pastors. Hypocrisy will try in vain to distort my words, for good faith will not err in judging people's real intentions."*

* *The Times*, March 19, 1901.

Three weeks later, Mgr. Antonius, Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, replied to this letter, having waited, as he explained, until the first outburst of her grief had subsided. He repelled the accusation of cruelty made by the countess by explaining that the count had rather been cruel to himself in voluntarily renouncing the only "source of eternal life," adding that it was against such renunciation on his part that his wife's protest should have been directed, and not against the action of the Holy Synod, whose decree merely recognised an accomplished fact. That decree, moreover, did not violate the Christian law of mercy and forgiveness, but, on the contrary, was an act of love toward the count, inviting him to repentance and reunion with the Church. As to the assertion of the countess that she could in any case obtain a Christian burial for her husband by love or money, his Eminence declared that any such act would be a criminal profanation, and he did not see why the countess should be so eager to force upon her husband a form of burial which he, apparently, would not wish to have. It was not astonishing that marks of sympathy continued to reach the count from all parts of the world. "There is a glory of man and a glory of God. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." As long as the count lives there is hope, and the Holy Synod had only expressed the exact truth in stating that he had withdrawn himself from the Church and is no longer a member of it unless and until he repent. Although the clergy wear diamond-studded mitres and stars, they would be just as much pastors of the Church if they were again dressed in rags and persecuted.*

Four months afterward Count Tolstoy fell gravely ill, and his life was despaired of. According to all accounts from Russia this prospect deeply alarmed both the ecclesiastical and the secular authorities, for their action had provoked popular feeling to a degree they had wholly failed to foresee. A most embar-

* *The Times*, April 8, 1901.

rassing dilemma faced them. If they refused Count Tolstoy Christian burial, they risked an explosion of anger against the Church. If they granted it, they stultified their own decree. Happily the occasion for a decision was postponed, but the Synod has already gone so far as to explain that the decree of excommunication was only temporary, not eternal. It seems highly probable that some way of avoiding so very delicate a situation will be found before it again threatens.

So far as a foreigner may express an opinion, the Church in Russia needs no defence of this kind. It has become part of the very nature of the masses of the people—as I have said before, even the State and the Church together cannot venture to change the Gregorian Calendar because the people will not have their saints' days altered. The excommunication of Tolstoy, too, could have no possible effect upon the educated classes, whose religious views are definite and well known. Finally, since so many of Tolstoy's writings are not permitted to be circulated in Russia, the effect of his views there is hardly so far-reaching as to call for such conspicuous and heavy-handed treatment.

The truth is, I believe, that Tolstoy's influence is first, that of his noble personal character; and second, that of the artist. It is in this latter light that educated Russians esteem him. I have often heard people speak with profound respect of his work as a creative artist, and in the next breath laugh at his theories of reform. What are these, in a word? I tried to summarise them, immediately after my conversation with him, as follows: No more nations and frontiers and patriotism, but the world; no more rulers and laws and compulsion, but the individual conscience; no more multitudinous cities and manufactures and money, but simply the tiller of the soil, eating of the fruit of his toil, exchanging with his neighbours the work of his hands, and finding in the changing round of natural processes alike the nourishment of his body and the delight of his eyes; while, like some

directing angel poised above, the law of love, revealed in Christ, lights each man's path, and so illumines the world.

It is, of course, a species of nihilism, for realisation of it would mean the annihilation of science, of invention, of art, of literature, but it is the nihilism of the visionary, and should have no terrors for the autocrat, the priest, or the major-general.

I have dwelt thus long upon my visit to Yasnaya Polyana, partly because Tolstoy is one of the most striking of living figures, and anything at first hand about him, especially now that we can hardly hope he will be included in this category much longer, is probably of interest; and partly because, in his vague and facile idealism, he is the typical Russian. There are, of course, compact groups of Russian reformers working directly for practical ends which they keep steadily in view. Among these the bimetallists are not the least numerous or energetic. But the vast majority of reformers, so far as I could judge from my own experience, are dreamers. Almost every serious student, for instance, is a socialist, but a pure theorist, seeking the line of development along which human nature can perfect itself. No doubt of this perfectibility ever occurs to him. Half of them label themselves Marxists, and the other half—some local name I have forgotten. When any new solution of the social problem is advocated anywhere, it immediately finds disciples in Russia. Thus during the last American Presidential Election, a Populist group of students sprang up, and still exists. As Sir Donald Wallace has pointed out, Russians, having received their political education from books, naturally attribute to theoretical considerations an importance which seems exaggerated to those who have been educated by political experience. "When any important or trivial question arises, they at once launch into the sea of philosophical principles." So far as the students are concerned, the result of this national habit is that they, the best educated

and most intelligent class of the community, exert little influence in the direction of change. When the next liberalising move ment comes—and such a movement is being unconsciously prepared from above—not they, but an entirely different class, will have constrained it.

CHAPTER IV

FINLAND: THE LAND OF WOOD AND WATER

FINLAND is a little country, and there is not much to tell about it. But it is the focus of some brave ideas, and its short story has no soiled page. A desolate and water-logged land, in a hard northern climate, three-quarters of its surface destitute of population, possessing no natural wealth except its forests and no natural advantages except its water-falls, where the ripening crops race against the descending frost for their harvest-goal and are often outstripped, and where the peasant for half the year lives like an Arctic explorer —how should it have any story? Yet the very hardness of the struggle has made the Finn one of the sturdiest specimens of humanity—only the sturdy could survive; industry was the condition of his existence; his loneliness has bred self-reliance, and his long solitudes have awakened faith. He has developed in this dark wintry corner of Europe a civilisation curiously his own—quaintly original on the one side and Transatlantically progressive on the other. He has a natural bent for science, especially in its practical application; art has been born to him —not much in quantity, but vigorous and independent in quality; while literature has by nature deep roots in the hearts of men whose chilly, infertile home-land is the richest of all the world in folk-song and lyric proverb, in legend and magic spell, in epic saga and chanted rune.

Yes, it is a little country, but it is big in character, big in the material and moral progress it has made under severe conditions, and it raises a big political question. No review of

Russia to-day could be complete that did not take Finland into account, though even in its short story there is much that cannot, with discretion, be discussed just now.

The first aspect under which the visitor to Russia hears of Finland is that of the playground of St. Petersburg. The frontier is but a couple of hours' distance by rail, yet this little journey takes you into a more attractive rurality than can be found in other directions. A Russian *grand seigneur*, with a vast estate and troops of servants, can have all the pleasures of country life and few of its inconveniences, even though his estate be mortgaged to the hilt and ready cash be a rare commodity. But for the ordinary man, and particularly for the foreign resident, it is difficult to find a small country house in pleasant and healthful surroundings. Russia is very flat and uninteresting, from a topographical point of view, and Russian villages do not offer by any means that wholesome life and idyllic environment in which the townsman finds temporary amusement and repose. On the contrary, they are too often dirty and drunken, and they are nearly always poor. In Finland, on the other hand, pine-clad hill and dashing stream form the commonest natural features; the peasants are fairly well-to-do, they are healthy, intelligent, and strikingly honest; sobriety rules, because the sale of intoxicants is absolutely prohibited; there is capital fishing to be had; while, perhaps most influential reason of all, owing to the lowness of the Finnish tariff, both necessaries and luxuries are far cheaper than in Russia. So every one who can afford it—and almost every foreign resident of the Capital—buys or rents a little country house in Finland, where his family lives during the summer—almost intolerable in the flat, canal-intersected city of Peter—and whither he betakes himself either daily or at each week-end.

The north-eastern part of St. Petersburg is called the Viborg quarter, and the Finland station is just on the other side of the Neva. The frontier is at Terijoki, thirty-three miles away, but there are no frontier formalities, as a perfunctory glance is given

at your baggage in the station before the train starts. There is no fear of much smuggling from a high-tariff country to a low-tariff one. Smuggling between the two countries, as I shall point out later, plays an important political part, but it is all the other way. Almost the only thing you may not take freely in your baggage into Finland is spirituous liquor. Even from the train you soon remark a difference between the two countries.

A COUNTRY HOUSE IN FINLAND

Russia is a land of plains, broken by occasional great rivers. Finland is a land of "rocks and rills," covered with masses of granite, an astonishing proportion of its surface water, and the train runs for hours past two unbroken lines of pine-woods. And man's handiwork shows as much difference as nature's. The wooden houses of the peasants, as well as of the better classes, are neat and pretty, mostly painted red ; they are always in good repair, the fences in order, the gates sound and closed. The whole country, in fact, looks well cared for—the home of hard-working people, prospering thriftily. And one curious and characteristic detail strikes the traveller before he alights. In Russia official

notices of every kind appear in Russian only. The Russian officially ignores the existence of foreign languages even where foreigners mostly congregate. If you do not know Russian there is but one thing to do—learn it. Finland, on the other hand, is cosmopolitan, for, to begin with, it is bilingual. Finnish, that strange, soft cousin of the Oriental Magyar tongue, ist he language of the people; Swedish is spoken in all the towns and by everybody above the status of peasant. And the notices to passengers in the railway carriages are in six languages: Finnish, Swedish, Russian, English, French, and German.

Neatness, and modest self-respecting prosperity, are even more noticeable in the towns than in the country districts. Viborg, the first important place you reach in the journey from Russia to the capital, is hardly a real Finnish town, for it is the commercial link between Finland and Russia, and a large proportion of its merchants are Russians and Germans, and Russian is spoken currently in commercial circles. The main line of railway runs through it; the branch to the north is only a few kilometres away; its splendid harbour is—except in winter—the chief maritime inlet and outlet of the country; and the great Saima Canal leads from the head of its bay deep into the multitudinous waterways of the interior. Needless to say, there is a strong Russian garrison here, and over the strange old slab-sided Gothic castle, built by the Swedish Governor Knutson in 1293, flies the little Russian "war-flag." The approach, too, is guarded by several modern forts upon islands in the bay, for Russia is open to attack from this side and takes her precautions accordingly. Viborg, thus, apart from its Castle and round-house, is commercial, modern, Russo-German Finland; it is not genuine Finland, either of our time, like Helsingfors, or of all time, like the villages and up-country towns.

Eight hours in the train, through almost unbroken pine-woods, with hardly a town of any importance the whole way,

THE CITY AND HARBOUR

bring you to Helsingfors, and here you are really in Finland of to-day. The Finn has an enthusiastic admiration for the capital of his country, which could be pathetic if it had not so good a basis of justification. Indeed, I doubt if any of the capitals of the world which count their age by centuries and their inhabitants by millions, evoke such a patriotic appreciation as this little place of 85,000 people which only began to exist in its present form within the lifetime of some now living. In certain respects I have never seen any city like it. It appears to have no slums, no rookeries, no tumble-down dwellings of the poor, no criminal

OF HELSINGFORS

quarter, no dirt. I did not specially search for these things, but I wandered about a good deal during a week's stay, and I did not see them. And I could not find them from the top of Observatory Hill with a field-glass. Down the centre of the city runs the wide Esplanade, all gardens and trees, with fine houses upon one side, and a truly metropolitan range of shops and hotels upon the other. In the middle, stands the bronze statue of the poet Runeberg, by his son, and graven on its pedestal is the national song he wrote. Every May the students of the University gather about his feet and sing his words—or at least they used to do so;

perhaps this is forbidden now. The spirit and metrical vigour of Runeberg's poetry are admirably shown, by the way, in the following spirited translation of "The March of the Biorneborgers," in the exact metre of the peculiar original, line for line—a poem now forbidden to be sung in Finland:—

Sons of a race whose blood was shed,
On Narva's field; on Poland's sand; at Leipzig; Lutzen's dark hills under;
Not yet is Finland's manhood dead;
With foemen's blood a field may still be tinted red.
All Rest, all Peace, Away! begone!
The tempest loosens; lightnings flash; and o'er the field the cannon thunder;
Rank upon rank, march on! march on!
The spirit of each father brave looks on as brave a son.
No nobler aim
Could light us to the field;
Our swords are flame;
Nor new our blood to yield;
Forward each man, brave and bold!
Lo! the glorious path of Freedom, centuries old!
Gleam high! thou banner Victory-sealed!
In the grey bygone days, long since, all battle-worn,
Be still our splendid colours, though tattered, onward borne!
Of Finland's ancient Standard there's yet a shred untorn.

Never shall our father's ground
Be reft by force from out the arms of soldiers who have never bled;
Never shall the word go round
That Finns to their free Northern home were traitors found.
The brave can only do and die
Not backward turn at danger's threat; nor shrink; nor quail; nor bow the head
Be ours the warrior's fortune high
To fall—we only plead for one last Victory!
Take sword in hand!
Rush gladly on the foe!
Die for our land,
So Honour's life shall grow!
Untiring plunge from fray to fray,
The present time is ours—'tis now the harvest-day;
Thinned ranks as splendid witness show

To Valour's daring deeds, our land that save and ward;
On with the grand old banner, that never battle scared,
Around the staff still gathers its faithful Finnish guard.*

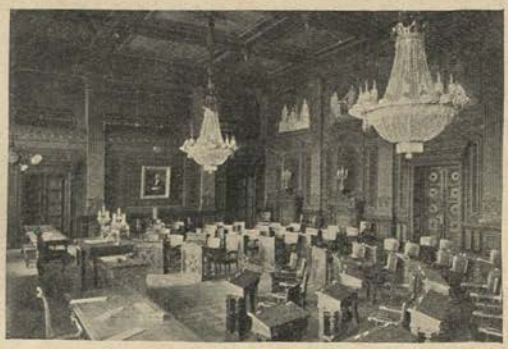
Above the Esplanade is the hill whereon stands the observatory and the fine well-known group of "The Shipwrecked" by the sculptor Stigell. From this height the splendid bay and harbour spread out before you. On the town side these end in rows of neat warehouses and railway lines. A little way out is the picturesque Yacht Club, on an islet, and farther on is the group of island fortresses around Sveaborg—the "Gibraltar of the Baltic," with its 6000 Russian troops and 900 guns. This was the scene of the treacherous surrender of the Swedish Admiral Cronstedt to the Russians in 1808, and of the unsuccessful attacks of the Allies during the Crimean War.

THE DIET HOUSE, HELSINGFORS

Helsingfors has many imposing buildings for so small a city, the best placed being the Lutheran church of St. Nicholas in the Senate Square, raised upon its little granite hill and reached by fifty wide steps. It may be seen behind the monument of Alexander II. in my illustration on page 73. This monument—also by the younger Runeberg, and erected by the Finnish people in 1894—is a proof of how easy it has been for Russia to enjoy the devotion of the Finns, for on the anniversary of the Emperor's assassination or fête-day it is surrounded by wreaths and memorial emblems of their grateful affection. The University, another fine building accommodating 2000 students, is named after Alex-

* *The Times*, January 8, 1901.

ander I., and his bust occupies the place of honour in the Aula. But to the visitor, especially just now, the most interesting buildings are the Senate House, with its magnificent salle, where the Emperor, if he came, would open the Diet; *Riddarhuset*, the great panelled hall, its walls covered with the escutcheons of all the knightly members of the Diet, where the knights hold their session; and *Ständerhuset*, the Estates' House, with its three halls where the representatives of the clergy, the bourgeoisie, and peasants sit during the rare meetings of the Diet. There is nothing remarkable in the architecture of these: they are simple, modern, and dignified, but to the stranger from a land of representative institutions they are fraught with the interest and pathos of some noble and historic landmark sinking slowly into the sea.



THE BURGHERS' CHAMBER

The first impression of "Helsinki," however, is one's last; surprise and admiration at the enterprise and vigour by which so poor and small a people have made of their capital so civilised and so progressive a modern city. Forty years ago Helsingfors had only 20,000 inhabitants, to-day it has more than four times that number, and as I have already remarked, I know of no capital city in the world which surpasses it in order, cleanliness, convenience and all the externals of modern civilisation. The streets are perfectly kept, and little electric-cars, models of their kind, furnish rapid and comfortable transport to all parts; education in all branches of knowledge, for both sexes, offers every theoretical and material opportunity; the Post-office, to take one example of government, is the best arranged—not the biggest, of course

—I have ever seen, our post-offices in the great provincial towns of England, where the whole of Helsingfors would be but a parish, being but barns in comparison; and on the table in my sitting-room at the Hôtel Kämp was a telephone by which I could converse with all parts of Finland. All these things are the signs of good citizenship, the more to be admired as it has grown upon

FINLAND'S LOVE FOR ALEXANDER II

The anniversary of his assassination

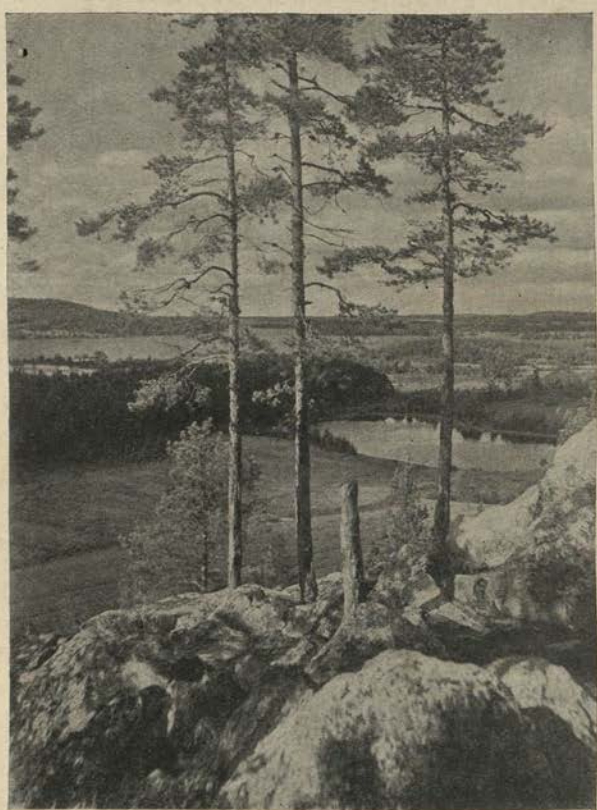
no rich soil of unlimited natural resources and vast easily acquired wealth, but has been cultivated, like the Spartan virtues of original New England, in the crevices of the rocks.

What the Finns have accomplished, however, cannot be adequately appreciated without a comparison of certain extra-

ordinary statistics of land and people. The area of Finland is 373,000 square kilometres, of which as many as 41,000 are inland water. No fewer than 250 rivers flow into the Baltic. And only twenty-eight per cent. of the superficial area of the country possesses a population of more than ten souls to the square kilometre. That is, seventy-two per cent.—say three-quarters, of Finland—is virtually uninhabited, while the remaining quarter has a density of only 23.5 inhabitants. At the same date as these statistics the neighbouring countries of Denmark had 60 inhabitants to the square kilometre, Russian Poland, 63, and the Government of Moscow, 67, while France had 72, Germany, 80, Holland, 140, and Belgium, 205. The extraordinary poverty and sterility of the land could not be more eloquently told. Yet this poor land and scattered folk—with everything but wood and waterfalls denied to them by nature, and handicapped by one of the worst climates of lands where people live at all—*exported* in 1898 no less than 180,000,000 francs' worth of natural and manufactured produce—nearly £3 worth per head of the total population! There need be few bounds to one's admiration and respect for the Finnish race.

The aspect of Finland is shown by the foregoing figures as plainly as by any illustrations of Finnish landscapes. It is a land of pine forest, of rock, of river and lake. Nature has but these three colours on her palette there, and the only difference between one landscape and another depends upon which of the three predominates at any particular place. The typical landscape—the composite Finnish portrait, so to speak—is seen when all these elements are present in equal prominence, and the human factor is superadded in the shape of a little patch of cultivated land around a cluster of wooden buildings. This combination is precisely shown in one of my illustrations, scattered spruce and fir trees where you stand, clinging, as these trees alone can, to the thin earth between the out-crops of granite hillside; below, in the shelter, the cleared land, marked off by snake-fences which

recall a landscape in Virginia; a stream or two, emptying into a lake which is connected with another and thus again with another until a great chain is formed; beyond and around, hills



THE FINNISH LANDSCAPE—MOUNTAIN, LAKE, FOREST, FIELD

clad thick with spruce and fir. That is Finland, where man inhabits it at all. Sometimes the forest predominates, as in the north and west, again the whole country appears to be lake and bog, and the only *terra firma* is the long narrow road between

two sheets of water; elsewhere your eyes and ears perceive nothing but dashing, roaring stream.

I have spoken of the "waterfalls" as one of the two natural resources of Finland, but this is not strictly accurate. There is not a real waterfall in Finland—only rapids. Imatra itself, the show place of the Grand Duchy, the Mecca of the tourist and the envy of the engineer, is a thousand yards of rocky, roaring rapids. The magnificent physical atlas of the country, recently published, shows some 700 rapids, a large proportion of which are suitable for hydraulic development for industrial purposes, or the production of electrical energy. A large number of rapids have been thus developed, and it is certain that such enterprise will extend greatly during the next few years. For not only is this the cheapest possible power, but it is peculiarly suited to the one industry, for which Finland possesses natural supplies, which will soon—by the exhaustion of similar supplies elsewhere—be unrivalled. I mean the manufacture of wood-pulp, and cellulose (chemical wood-pulp) for making paper, cardboard, &c. Finland's forests are as yet hardly touched, and she has a vast area of them. An official estimate assigns forty-six per cent. of the entire area to forests—a superficies of thirty-seven and a half million acres, or 58,500 square miles. In 1899 it was calculated that these forests contained 22,396,289 large trees, and 30,712,501 smaller trees, still good enough for sawing. Much of this is unavailable for commercial purposes until the price of wood and pulp rises considerably, for at present prices, it is too far to the North, or too remote from river transport to pay for cutting and bringing down. But these prices are steadily rising, and must continue to rise, while to-day Finland has forests for sale, intersected by streams for floating down the logs, and powerful rapids from which tens of thousands of horse-power can easily be developed to grind them into pulp.

Already this industry has taken on large proportions. In 1865 there were two pulp-mills; in 1872, six more; to-day there

THE RAPIDS OF IMATRA

are over thirty. In 1898, twenty-five pulp-mills, employing 1959 men, produced 50,894 tons, of the value of a quarter of a million sterling—nearly a million and a quarter of dollars. Besides this, eight cellulose mills produced 13,296 tons, value £120,242, and fourteen paper mills, employing 2828 men, produced 32,022 tons, value £552,750. In fact, to so preponderating an extent is this

A ROAD IN FINLAND

the chief Finnish industry that of the 180 millions of francs which, as I have said, was the total value of Finnish exports in that year, no less than 110,000,000 francs were represented by wood, pulp, and paper. In view of the ever-increasing circulation of newspapers, which depend wholly upon pulp for their supply of paper, and the facts that America is almost denuded of her pulp-wood forests, that Canada is using up her supplies at a great rate, that

Russian wood is poor in quality and remote in situation, and that no other country has any forests of this nature at all, the question, where is pulp to come from ten years hence ? is becoming a pressing one to all who have to supply the insatiable maw of the newspaper press. To-day in Finland, if you know where to go and how to set to work, you can buy at a fair price a powerful waterfall, and the freehold of enough forest land around it to cut and grow and cut again enough timber to keep the waterfall at work grinding night and day for ever. Finland, therefore, in my opinion, offers an excellent opportunity for the investment of foreign capital in this direction. Certain fiscal changes, too, which there is good ground to believe that Russia will shortly impose,* will place this industry in Finland upon an even more advantageous footing.

* See Chapter V., page 91, *footnote*.

CHAPTER V

THE FINNS AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

FOUR races have struggled unconsciously for predominance in Finland, and the native population of to-day keeps something of the impress of each of them: the dark, slender, poetic, dreamy, singing Karelian, who first came to colonise it over the eastern border; the fair, broad-shouldered, hard-working, Tory Tavast; his cousin the real Finn; the impulsive, blue-eyed Swede from westward; and the child-like roaming Lapp from the north. But, as I said at the start, the real ancestor of the Finn is his climate. He is hardy in body and hard in temperament; given to silence; laborious and conscientious; with many virtues and few graces. The fact that he makes a splendid sailor, tells much of his character, as it causes him to be found before the mast the world over—there is a special mission to Finnish sailors in San Francisco. He steers the tar-boats down his own perilous rapids, with the daring and coolness of the Indian in his canoe; he lives as frugally—and for the same reason—as the Highlander of Scotland; you cannot help but trust him, but it is often more than you can do to get him to talk. His agriculture is yet of the most primitive character: his favourite method of cultivation is to cut down the trees in winter, leave them to dry for a season, and then burn them, with the underwoods, to clear the land, and fertilise it at the same time.

6

A FINNISH MOURNING STAMP

Within his hard shell, however, there is a tender kernel of romance and playfulness and song. His immortal epic of the

past, the Kalevala, still echoes in his heart, and his old men clasp hands and sing its runes, or others which come unbidden to their lips, in thrilling strophe and antistrophe. On Whitsun-eve, his young men light bonfires and make merry round them, and Christmas brings out his candles and fir-trees and fat fare. But he comes out of his shell most of all in midsummer for a *Streitgesang*, or Eisteddfod, when from far and near come singing-clubs and choirs, to be judged by a jury of their elders, in the court of a green glade, before an audience of the whole countryside. Then he plays quaint childlike games.

To one wise law he doubtless largely owes his freedom from a vice which cold and poverty and loneliness and opportunity have developed to a terrible degree among his great neighbours to the east; the sale of alcohol, in any shape or form, is absolutely prohibited in Finland outside the towns. A Finnish countryman can only obtain intoxicating liquor by going to a town and bringing it back with him, and towns are few and distant, and he is not a mobile unit. And when he wishes to celebrate some domestic festival, and like King Olaf's guests, to "feast late and long," he has to get a special police permit for enough spirits to entertain his neighbours and drink "*Skaal* to the Northland, *skaal*" like his forebears, the vikings and the "hoary skalds." Except for this law the savings bank of Suomi would tell a different and a sorrier tale.

The law-makers of Finland have also been strikingly wise in all that relates to education. It is a land of schools. Except upon the eastern frontier, where the people are still backward, everybody can read and write. The total population in 1890 was 2,380,140, and so far as I can calculate, no fewer than 540,412 souls were attending school. That is, out of every hundred of the entire population, something like twenty-three were actually at school. This seems an extraordinary record, taking all things into consideration. There are 2608 university students, including women; 4723 are at the lycées; private schools educate

FINNISH AGRICULTURE—BURNING THE WOODS FOR A SEED-BED

7785; primary schools contain 413,867; "urban popular schools" give instruction to 25,931; and "rural popular schools" to 72,991; normal schools are preparing 1881 teachers, the sexes being of about equal number; and private schools receiving a subvention from the State have 7785 children. With such a foundation, one is no longer surprised to read the long list of learned societies which flourish here—literary, philological, juridical, medical and scientific. One of these, the Society of Finnish Literature, is laying the world under obligations by the wealth of folk-song it has discovered and preserved. So long ago as 1889 it had a collection of 22,000 epic, lyric, and magic songs, 13,000 legends, 40,000 proverbs, 10,000 enigmas, 2000 runes, and 20,000 incantation formulas.

I find in my note-books a number of other figures about Finland, some of them eloquent concerning the national character and achievement. We hardly realise what a little people it is until we see the fact in numerals. Twice the whole population would still be half a million short of filling London. Including the capital, there are but three towns larger than Viborg, which has only 24,569 inhabitants. In the whole country there are only thirty-seven "towns." There are but 461 Roman Catholics in Finland, and only 45,000 members of the Russian Orthodox Church, and these almost all on the eastern frontier adjoining Russia. Of 2,380,140 inhabitants at the census of 1890, no fewer than 2,334,547 were Lutherans.

The public debt is 112,000,000 francs, and every penny of this has been incurred for construction of railroads, of which there are 1094 miles belonging to the State, and 112 miles of private companies. There are 174 savings banks—six to a town, and it must be remembered that many of these "towns" are what we should call villages—these banks have 124,245 depositors, who possess among them close upon 70,000,000 francs of savings—that is, the savings banks alone have on deposit popular savings equal to nearly two-thirds of the entire public debt.

The people who can show facts like these in the hard conditions of their homeland must indeed be welcome citizens in a land where nature is lavish and men are still lacking, and it is astounding that any *régime* lucky enough to have them should take steps which drive them away. Some years ago there were 80,000 Fins in the United States, and to-day numbers of them are emigrating to ‹Canada, where it is now easier for them to get good land.

ARHIPPAINI MIIHKALI, THE FINNISH BLIND BARD

This reflection naturally leads to the consideration of the one matter which the Finn regards as of vital importance to him—the question which keeps the little northern land in the world's eye. I refer to the relations between the Grand Duchy and the Russian Empire.

At present, as everybody knows, these are almost the worst possible. Twice within the last few months I have seen a capital where every woman was in black. One was London, where the people were mourning their dead Queen; the other was Helsingfors, where people mourned their lost liberty. Every woman in Helsingfors bore the black symbols of personal woe. But personal protest went much farther than this. When General Bobrikof, the Russian Governor-General, who was sent to carry out the new *régime*, took his walks abroad, every Finn who saw him coming, crossed to the other side of the street. When he patronised a concert for some charitable purpose, the Finns bought all the tickets, but not a single one of them attended. The hotels

refused apartments to one of the Finnish senators who supported the Russian proposals. By the indiscretion of a porter he secured rooms at one of the principal hotels and refused to leave. Therefore the hotel was boycotted and it is temporarily ruined. The Russian authorities, intending to make the Russian language compulsory in all Government departments, invited several young Finnish functionaries to St. Petersburg to learn Russian under very advantageous conditions and with every prospect of official promotion. When the language ordinance was published and these Finns saw why they were desired to learn Russian, they immediately resigned. The Russians took charge of the postal system of Finland and abolished the Finnish stamps. Thereupon the Finns issued a "mourning stamp," all black except the red arms of Finland and the name of the country in Finnish and Swedish, and stuck it beside the Russian stamps on their letters. The Russians retorted by strictly forbidding its sale and destroying all letters which bore it. Now it is one of the curiosities of philately. On the last anniversary of the publication of the Tsar's manifesto to the Finnish Senate concerning the modification of the administration of Finland, in one of the streets a black sheet was displayed on which were inscribed the names of those Senators who voted in favour of the proclamation of the Imperial manifesto, and in the evening the windows of the houses inhabited by Finns were hung with black curtains, and the lights in the rooms extinguished. A deputation of ladies placed a mourning band on the monument of Alexander II., while groups of young men made a round of the town and compelled Russian shopkeepers to put out their lights. They also forced their way into Finnish houses in order to extinguish the lamps. One of the bands demonstrated before a Russian bookseller's shop and made rough music outside the residences of some Senators, to whom threatening letters bearing the signatures of members of the Street Patriotic Association were sent.* So the

* *The Times*, February 23, 1901.

wretched struggle goes on, and the young Finn turns his eyes and often his steps toward the Western World.

Nothing could be easier than to write a few pages of dithyrambic denunciation, declaring one side to be wholly right and the other wholly wrong, and I well know that I shall be reproached

THE RUNE-SINGERS

in no measured terms for not doing so. Moreover, sweeping generality is much more convincing than discrimination. Yet I find myself unable to take this course. The rights and wrongs of the dispute are not, so far as I can judge, thus strictly apportioned. Like most rights and wrongs, when disputes rage, they are shared. I am certain, too, that only harm is done by long and bitter discussion of the relations of Russia and Finland at this moment. Therefore I shall write briefly, but frankly, on this painful topic.

There is no doubt whatever that, under the Finnish Consti-

tution, the contention of the Finns is right and that of the Russians wrong. In the Fundamental Laws, the Order on the Diet, paragraph 71, says: "A fundamental law can be instituted, modified, explained, or abolished, only on the representation of the Emperor and Grand Duke, and with the consent of all the Orders." That is clear, and it is final, so far as any law or treaty can be. Therefore, when Russia insists upon modifying, abolishing, or introducing fundamental conditions of Finnish national life *without* the consent of the Finnish Diet, she is acting illegally and unconstitutionally. When Finland was taken from Sweden and annexed to Russia in 1809, the Tsar Alexander I. conferred upon it—and conferred willingly, and from conviction of the expediency of the act—a distinct autonomy, and that autonomy has been confirmed by the Coronation declaration of each succeeding Tsar. Finland has done nothing to show that the concession was unwise, or to justify its withdrawal. She has been loyal, she has raised her due contingent of soldiers—a very small one, it must be allowed—and she has paid her financial contribution. Her Constitution is now practically abrogated by the decision of the Russian Government that the Tsar has power to decide what laws must be subject to discussion by the Diet, and what may be put in force without such discussion and Finnish constitutional acceptance. In their appeal to the Tsar the members of the Diet point out "that a law, whether fundamental or general, to be valid in the country can be enacted only with the approval and consent of the Estates"; that "neither the institutions of Russia and its autocratic system have been introduced into Finland, nor have they had any force there"; that the Council of State "cannot act as a legislative organ for Finland," and that the Imperial manifesto and the statutes based upon it are "inconsistent with the right of making their own laws which, according to the Constitution of Finland, belongs to her people." There can be no question of the historical accuracy of these contentions.

The chief Russian actions of which the Finns complain are the appointment of a Russian instead of a Finnish Secretary of State, the taking-over of the Finnish post-office, the announcement that after a certain future date Russian will be the language employed in all official departments, the severe censorship and suppression of newspapers, and the institution of a new law of military service. Of these it is the last named which has brought something like despair into the Grand Duchy.

FINNISH TYPES

It was stated on good authority that this proposal, when laid before the Russian Council of Ministers some three months ago by General Kuropatkin, Minister of War, and General Bobrikof, Governor-General of Finland, was discussed for four hours and then rejected by a large majority, the Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovitch, and M. de Witte, Minister of Finance, both voting with the majority. If this were so, the Tsar, whose decision of course overrides that of the Council, has been guided by his military advisers, for the new law, in a somewhat modified form, has now been signed and officially promulgated, and is to come into force in 1903. It is accompanied by an Imperial manifesto pointing out that the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy must share, in common with all other parts of the

Empire, the military burdens necessary to secure the unity of the Russian army and the national defence. Not to go into needless detail, the effect of the new law, two years hence, will be to abolish the post of Finnish Commander-in-Chief, to abolish the Finnish army as a distinct military organisation, and to draft the Finnish recruits into Russian regiments, which will for a time have a specially Finnish character, be paid for by the Finnish exchequer, and be liable to service anywhere. The number of recruits will be fixed by the Minister of War, and the length of service will be eighteen years—three with the colours and fifteen in the reserve.* Some of the above provisions are obviously only temporary, and the Imperial intention undoubtedly is to make Finland contribute to the national army precisely like every other part of Russia.

Now, it is easy to understand that military service in Russia will be intensely distasteful to the Finnish peasant. But it is doubtless equally distasteful to every other peasant of the Tsar's dominions. No peasant, in any country, enjoys forced military service. The Finn will suffer rather more because he will be surrounded at first with a strange language, and because his attachment to his home is greater. The blow hits him harder, also, because he has hitherto enjoyed an exemption unknown to Russian or German or Frenchman: his loss is the withdrawal of a privilege, rather than the infliction of an injustice. Why should the Finn, alone of all subjects of the Tsar, escape the personal burden of military service? I confess that I can see no reason, except that under his Constitution he is thus exceptionally favoured.

To be quite frank, the charge of violation of the Finnish Con-

* The *Novoye Vremya*, in commenting on the New Military Service Law for the Grand Duchy, sagaciously points out that as the existing period of service with the colours for Russian conscripts is five years, and as the object of the new law is to secure unity of service in the Russian army, this particular enactment probably points to a reduction from five to three years in the period of active service throughout the whole Russian army.—*Morning Post*, August 2, 1901.

stitution is met by one simple consideration. As a matter of plain fact, there is in human affairs of this kind no such thing as finality. Or rather, the only final thing is *force majeure*—imperative national self-interest. Before that all promises are air, and all treaties are black marks on white paper. I put this brutally (foreseeing the consequences), but there is no use in mincing words. Every student of history, politics, or diplomacy

CROSSING A BRIDGE IN FINLAND

knows it to be the simple truth, and every country, not Russia alone, affords examples in proof. Germany broke her promises to Denmark. France broke her promises about Madagascar. To come nearer home, England has repeatedly pledged herself to evacuate Egypt, and the United States was solemnly pledged to grant complete independence to Cuba. None of these pledges seems likely to be kept. Therefore, if it is, in the judgment of Russia, an imperative condition of her national prosperity or security that her relations with Finland should be fundamentally altered, she will only be following the ordinary line of historical and modern precedents by breaking her promises and tearing

up her pledges. I do not defend the principle—I state the fact. "Pity 'tis, 'tis true."

And who is to be the judge of Russian national prosperity and security? Obviously, Russia herself—not the well-meaning foreigners who from the safe comfort of their libraries hurl their books of reference at her head. It is not they who will stop the smuggling across her frontier from Finland, to the injury of her heavily taxed manufacturers and merchants, nor they who, in her hour of need, will increase her army or defend her western frontier. Russia, like Italy, *farà da se*, and like every other sovereign Power that has ever grown up and endured, will and must take all the steps that seem to be necessary to that end.

Having said so much, I bow before the storm; but one or two considerations should be borne in mind by those who will passionately differ with me. I shall not be accused of having failed to give due credit to the Finnish national character for the wonderful progress she has achieved, but let it be remembered that Finland has thriven under the protection of the Russian sword. She has borne virtually no burden of national defence. If she had been independent, and obliged to be ready to mobilise an army or a fleet at any time for her own protection, her budget would have presented a different aspect. Moreover, the high tariff country has protected the low tariff country. The Finn has thriven under a very low scale of customs duties, while his Russian neighbour and competitor has had to meet the demands of a high one.* Living is cheap in Finland: that is one of the

* The Russian Government decided long ago to assimilate the Finnish tariff to that of Russia. Germany, which exports to Finland about £2,000,000 worth of goods annually, naturally viewed the proposed change with alarm, but although this question of the Finnish tariff was not mentioned in the commercial treaty between the two Governments, the following arrangement was concluded by an exchange of notes. Russia undertook to permit Finland to maintain its tariff unaltered until December 31, 1898, after which date the difference between the Finnish and Russian tariffs might be reduced by 50 per cent., after December 31, 1901, by 75 per cent., and the two tariffs may be made identical after December 31, 1903. Up to the present time, however, no change has been made.

reasons why so many Russians spend half the summer and half their incomes there. Cigars cost a quarter of what they cost in Russia: every daily summer resident takes back a pocketful every morning. All Finnish produce enters the great Russian market under a differential duty—that is, practically, with a bounty. Russian manufacturers cannot compete in Finland with the pro-

A FINNISH WEDDING: THE BRIDE'S PRAYER ON LEAVING HOME

duce of England or Germany. Finally, as things are now, Russia really believes herself vulnerable to a foreign foe coming *viâ* Finland. In her view, national security means military and other unification. I have no competence to say whether this view is right or wrong. I only say that Russia holds it, and that settles the question.

There has been bad procedure on both sides, and, as in the case of the hen and the egg, it is hard to say which came first. Russian administrators in Finland have committed blunder after blunder of tact, have given offence where none need have been

given, have needlessly wounded the national sentiments of a proud and stubborn people. The Finns have shown themselves so intransigent, so careless of Russian feelings and needs, so hostile, in fact, as to put weapons in the hands of those who declare them to be really enemies of Russia. I repeat, therefore, that no true

A FINNISH WEDDING: VEILING THE DOWERED BRIDE

friend to Finland will seek, under these circumstances, to embitter her relations with Russia.

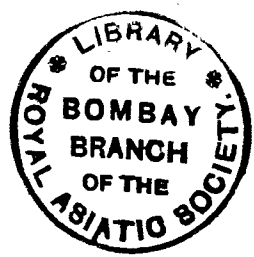
If this remark be justified, it applies especially to those among us who are always, assuredly with the best motives, ready to sign memorials and hold meetings and found societies to protest against the management by other nations of their own affairs, or to summon our own Government to redress wrongs for which it is not responsible. The share of responsibility for the Crimean War which the Society of Friends undoubtedly incurred by its misleading deputation to Nicholas I. should be a warning. The meetings held and the letters written to the late Tsar concerning

the treatment of Jews in Russia come under the same category. In this case it might have been thought that the spectacle of the great Hebrew financial houses floating gigantic Russian loans would have been sufficient to deter Christians from stepping in where the co-religionists of the oppressed, indispensably powerful in their own sphere, would not tread. To have plunged into war to avert or avenge the sufferings of Armenia, with all Europe ranged against such a course, would have been an act fraught with extreme national peril, from which we were happily preserved, though there were many who urged it upon us. And the continual and often ignorant * denunciations of Russia for her action in Finland is, in my opinion, equally futile and unwise. The desirability of minding one's own business is as great in international relations as in private life, even though good people often lose sight of it. And let us not forget that Russians dislike and resent abuse and denunciation precisely as much as we do ourselves, and are just as apt as we are to stiffen their backs in consequence of it.

In conclusion, there is one more consideration which those who raise the loudest cries of illegality would do well to ponder. Russia, as one of her leading statesmen remarked to me, might, with perfect ease and safety and in all the odour of perfect legality, absorb the whole of Finland next month, and wipe it off the map as a separate entity. This would be the simple process. First, she announces that she withdraws from all protection over Finland and grants to the former Grand Duchy absolute and complete national independence. Then, as the presence of an independent and possibly hostile State upon her exposed frontier would be obviously incompatible with her national security, she marches an army corps into Finland and annexes the country—lock, stock, and barrel. White to play—mate in two moves. There would be a huge outcry, but anybody who knows any-

* I read in a recent issue of a leading London daily paper the statement that Russia had suppressed the use of the Finnish language throughout Finland!

thing of contemporary Europe knows that not a finger would be raised to stop her. And I do not see an American fleet steaming up the Baltic. Thus Russia could get all she wants, and infinitely more than she is asking, without transgressing for an instant or by a hair's breadth that sacred formal legality in which laws and lawyers often perpetrate injustice everywhere.


LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER VI

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SIBERIA

ANY account of Siberia should begin with the words, "Once upon a time," for it must sound like a fairy-tale. The little beginnings, when the first Tsars of Moscow authorised the first expedition across the Urals ; the private family that financed it ; the Volga boatman, become pirate, his life forfeited for his crimes, who led it ; the vast distances, the awful climate, the strange peoples, the unsurpassed heroism of these pioneers; later on, the magnificent diplomacy, the fine strategy, the perfect insight which outwitted Tatar, Tungus, Manchu, and Jesuit alike; the military tenacity which stuck to what diplomacy won, even when England and France allied tried to take it away ; after the conquest, the development ; first furs, then gold, then wheat, then coal, and now at last the greatest railway in the world and possibly the eventual mastery of the Far East behind the snort of the locomotive—there is not in history, so far as I know, a chapter which, being fact, breathes such an air of fairy-land.

So, once upon a time, there dwelt upon the banks of the Volga a man named Vassili, the son of Timothy, the son of Athanasius Alenin the carter, earning his hard bread by towing boats up the great river. He was nicknamed "the millstone," because he ground the corn for his comrades—Yermak. A man of iron physique and primitive passions, the lonely boats were at his mercy, so he became a pirate and murdered their owners and plundered their cargoes. At last the terrible tales reached the

ear of Ivan the Terrible, who decreed his death and sent a force to hang him and his band of Don Cossacks. Up the highway of the Volga they fled, till on the banks of the Kama, not far from the foothills of the Ural Mountains, they came to the abode of a rich family of settlers and traders named Stroganof, who at that very moment were casting envious eyes across the range to the land of Yugra, whence the Ostiaks brought such precious sables. In Yermak the Stroganofs saw the man they needed. They furnished him with money and arms, he gathered a motley crew of adventurers round him, and on New Year's Day, 1581, he started. That was the beginning; the railway to Port Arthur is not the end.

Yermak was a fox in cunning and a lion in fighting. His perils were endless and his sufferings terrible. One by one his old Cossack comrades of the Volga were slain by his side, and at last he was literally caught napping by his chief enemy, the blind Tatar chief, Kuchum, in a camp on the banks of the Irtysh River, and after cutting his way to the water was drowned while trying, like the old boatman he was, to swim to safety. But before this he had carried the two-headed eagle of Byzantium, which Ivan the Terrible had just adopted for the blazon of Moscovy, almost as far as the site of Tobolsk; he had bartered the key of a new empire for the Tsar's pardon; he was a prince and wore a mantle sent him by the Imperial hands; he had set Russia's goal immutably in the East. Moreover, although Kuchum killed him in the end, he had seized the old man's capital two years before, and made it a centre of Asiatic trade for Russia. This capital was called Sibir, and it has given its name to five million square miles of Russia in Asia. Henceforth, therefore, let us pronounce the first syllable of Siberia short.

After Yermak's death the absorption of Siberia proceeded as steadily as water trickling down hill. The loadstone was ever the sable, and as fast as one district was stripped of its furs, rumours of the wealth of the next drew the pioneers on. Sometimes furs

were scarce, at other times the Cossacks lined their coats with sable. The little bands of explorers built themselves *zimovie*, winter quarters of wood, and gradually the soldiery followed and erected their *ostrogs*, wooden blockhouse forts, near by. Terrible suffering was, of course, common; starvation and frost-bite took their yearly toll; more than once it is recorded that men ate men in their extremity; one expedition had to abandon twenty-four soldiers with frozen feet upon an ice-bound river, which engulfed their corpses in the spring. But ever the movement spread—now by individual enterprise, now by Government aid, now in spite of Government opposition. Heroism against nature and natives alike became endemic. Russia pushed steadily on. Tobolsk, near Kuchum's deserted capital, was founded in 1587; the next great river, the Yenissei, was reached, and Yenisseisk founded in 1620; the Lena discovered and Yakutsk built in 1632. Irkutsk, on the Angara, close to its outlet into Lake Baikal, dates from 1651, and before this, to the north, Dejnef had sailed through Bering's Strait in 1648, Cossacks had made their appearance on the Sea of Okhotsk in 1636, Poyarkof had found the Amur in 1644, and in 1650 Khabarof had captured the town of Albazin, to the north of the Amur, and founded at the junction of the Ussuri and the Amur the town now called Khabarofsk, he being the first Russian to come into contact—which meant conflict—with the Chinese. Thus in seventy years after Yermak had started to cross the Urals for the unknown, fur-bearing land of "Yugra," Russia had extended right across Asia, northward as far as the inaccessible Arctic regions, southward to the borders of China, and eastward to the bank of the mighty river which falls into the Pacific. In the north the expansion continued, for in 1697 Atlasof conquered Kamchatka; but a sudden check came to the eastward and southern advance by the pusillanimous treaty of Nertchinsk in 1689—the one occasion on which Russia has been a victim to that venerable bogey, the military power of the Chinese. This was, by the way, the first convention between

Chinese and any Western nation, and by it Russia lost the Amur and her access to any useful part of the Pacific seaboard.

For nearly one hundred and fifty years the tide was stayed in the Far East, while Russia's energies were sapped and her vigour rudely tried by events at home. The race of Rurik had become extinct; the false Demetrius had desolated the country; the family of Romanoff had finally established itself on the throne of Moscow at the moment of Russia's direst need; Moscow itself had been burned and occupied by the Polish enemy; the land had been a prey to insurrections. The Romanoffs saved Russia, but it was long before they had any strength to spare for her far frontiers, and even the colossal energy of Peter the Great, though he was sensitive enough to the pull of the Eastern loadstone, was almost monopolised by the task of lifting Russia into line with her Western neighbours. Nine Russian rulers came and went—four of them were women, one was a child, and the reigns of all but two were very short—before Russia resumed her eastward march. But when Alexander I. had finished his successive wars with France, Austria, Sweden, and Turkey, when Nicholas I. was not yet plunged into the war in the Crimea, the moment arrived, and with it the man. The sudden elevation in 1847 of the young General Muravief, Governor of Tula, to the post of Governor-General of Eastern Siberia—an act of administrative genius on the part of Nicholas I.—closed the period of Siberian eclipse which had begun a hundred and forty-eight years before with the Treaty of Nertchinsk, and opened the brilliant chapter which leaves Russia to-day with a naval base, an army, and a railway at the gates of Peking. As Yermak was the hero of the first chapter, so Muravief is the hero of the second—he left Siberia in 1861—and his statue at Khabarofsk looks down with proudly folded arms upon as splendid a piece of creative statesmanship as modern history records. He saw the end from the beginning, and in spite of the frequent doubts and hesitancies of his sovereigns, the machinations of his many and bitter enemies, and the vast natural

difficulties of his task, he realised it to the full, for after his retirement his work proceeded almost mechanically to its conclusion. He founded Petropavlofsk, on the Pacific coast, in 1849, fortified it, and enabled it to beat off triumphantly the English and French fleets in 1854—the only Russian success of the Crimean War. He established Nikolaiefsk, at the mouth of the Amur, in 1850, and in 1858 concluded with China the Convention of Aigûn, which gave Russia eastward all the territory from the Ussuri River to the sea, and carried her southern boundary where for the present it remains—at the Korean frontier. In 1860 he selected her great naval base of Vladivostok, its name meaning "the dominion of the East." The rest was automatic. On March 17, 1891, an Imperial rescript ordered the construction of the Great Siberian Railway; on March 27, 1898, Russia obtained—nominally as "lease and usufruct," but really for ever and a day—the railway terminus and impregnable naval fortress of Port Arthur, commanding by land and sea the only practicable approach to the capital of the Chinese Empire. The fairy-tale is told.

I have not taken this rapid glance at Siberian history because the history of Siberia possesses intrinsically greater interest or importance than the history of any other part of the Russian Empire. It is to illustrate and emphasise a vital principle of Russian life as essential to a correct comprehension of her past and an intelligent anticipation of her future, as the principle of autocracy or the character of her people. This is, that as Russia was Oriental in her origin, so she moves to the Orient by innate and congenital compulsion. Only while Peter the Great indulged his dream of rivalling the West, and while Russia was distracted and exhausted by internal disorder and external enemies, was this natural process stayed. It has been, it is, and it always will be, her normal development: in the eyes of her strongest men it is her divine mission. A seaman would describe

her course as "east half south." In her blood is the irresistible mysterious *Drang nach Osten;* like Man himself she—

> Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown,
> Touches some wheel, or verges to some goal.

It has been pointed out that the sea alone stopped the Cossacks in the seventeenth century, and when they got to work again in the nineteenth, the Russians crossed the Pacific, and pushed on to within a few miles of San Francisco, long before the first "prairie schooner" sailed over the plains. The map of Asia is a Russian step-ladder: the Urals, Western Siberia, Eastern Siberia, Baikalia, Kamchatka, the Amur, Manchuria; the Steppe; Khiva, Turkestan, the Merv Oasis, Bokhara, Samarkand; these are the rungs she has climbed. Persia, Kashgar, Afghanistan, India itself—unless a mightier force than herself bar the way, her feet will be here too in the fulness of time. The "half south" in her course is shown by the gradual descent of her naval base in the Far East: Petropavlofsk, Nikolaiefsk, Vladivostok, Port Arthur. If you would understand Russia, and interpret and forecast aright the march of great events, never forget that, for her, eastward the course of empire takes its way; that as the sap rises, as the sparks fly upward, as the tides follow the moon, so Russia goes to the sunrise and the warm water.

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CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT SIBERIAN RAILWAY

AT present there is no direct connection between St. Petersburg and the Siberian Railway, but a direct line is under construction. Moscow is the western terminus, and a train leaves for Irkutsk every afternoon. This is the ordinary slow train, consisting chiefly of third-class carriages, with one second-class and half a first-class, and a mail van. It makes a direct connection with Irkutsk, but passengers have to change more than once. Through travellers, and almost all who go far into Siberia, except the poor and the colonists—who have fourth-class trains to themselves—take the *train de luxe* which leaves Moscow every Saturday at a quarter to nine P.M. This service is performed by four trains, known as Nos. 1, 2, and 3, which are purely Russian, and the train of the International Sleeping Car Company.

The Siberian Express is still a novelty in Russia, and people come to the station to inspect its luxurious appointments and witness its departure. The Siberian station is the finest in Moscow, with an imposing white façade—"God Save the Tsar" in permanent gas illumination over the entrance—spacious halls, an admirable restaurant, and a series of parallel platforms, which make one think sadly of certain great London termini. At the farthest of these stand five unusually large and heavy corridor carriages and a powerful engine. As always in Russia, a crowd of uniformed officials is on hand; a brilliant light pours through the little windows high up in the flat sides of the carriages; the locomotive is only purring softly, but somewhere in the train an engine is at work at high speed, for there is a cloud of escaping

steam, a stream of wood sparks, and a shrill buzz; and a chattering, laughing, crying crowd is at each entrance taking long leave of those going far away. Three strokes of the bell, big men with swords kiss each other fervently, a whistle, a snort of the engine, an answering whistle, and the train is off into the night on its unbroken journey of 3371 miles, to the far confines of that land whose name was recently only a synonym of horror.

The Russians are very proud of their Siberian train. They told me at every chance that I could never have seen such a train

A SIBERIAN LOCOMOTIVE

—that there is nothing so luxurious and so complete in the world. This is a mistake of tact—it rather causes one to look for shortcomings, and little failings look larger in the light of these boasts, Moreover, the Siberian Express needs no puff; from almost every point of view it is a marvellous achievement, though the train itself is not so wonderful as Russians think. It differs enough, however, from all other *trains de luxe* to be worth a detailed description. The first engine I noticed was built in France, all the rest were Russian, and some of these, with four large driving-wheels coupled together, were extremely powerful. These were freight engines; in fact, after the line enters Siberia all its engines are freight engines; the train is a very heavy one, the speed is low, and passenger engines will not come until the line is complete and a great effort is made to shorten the entire journey. Be-

hind the locomotive comes a composite car, the forward part being the locked luggage compartment, and the after-section being the kitchen. Between the two is the electric-light plant, for the entire train, even to the red tail-lamps, is lighted by electricity. This plant is an illustration of the enterprise Russian engineers are showing in every direction. Steam is supplied by an ordinary upright boiler, but the dynamo is run by a tiny Laval steam turbine—the same Norwegian firm that makes the familiar milk separators—revolving at an enormous speed. This turbine makes the shrill note that is audible whenever the train stops after dark. The electric plant was not out of order for a moment during my double journey, and the trains were lighted magnificently.

The second carriage contains the sleeping quarters of the cooks and waiters, the pantry and the restaurant. This is a car which formerly served as a royal saloon, and it is in no way suited for a dining-car. It contains two leather sofas, a piano, three tables seating four persons, and certain absurd tables about eighteen inches square. In the front part of this car there is also a full-sized bath, with shower, and an exercising machine, something like the crank in our prisons, which you make more or less laborious by adjusting a weight. The third and fifth cars are second class, and the fourth first class.

Except in two points, there is virtually no difference between the two classes, although, of course, as elsewhere, or, rather, much more than elsewhere, you are less likely to find objectionable companions in the one than in the other. There is a through corridor at the side, and six compartments for four persons and one for two persons in the second class, and three larger compartments and one small one in the first class. One of the advantages which the first has over the second is that in the former the centre of the car is an open salon, with sofa, easy chairs, writing-table, clock, and a large map of the Russian Empire. This, when it does not happen to be monopolised by a party playing

cards, is certainly delightful, and I have seen nothing like it elsewhere, except in the private car of an American railway magnate. Both first and second class have one improvement over similar trains elsewhere, which cannot be too highly commended. All

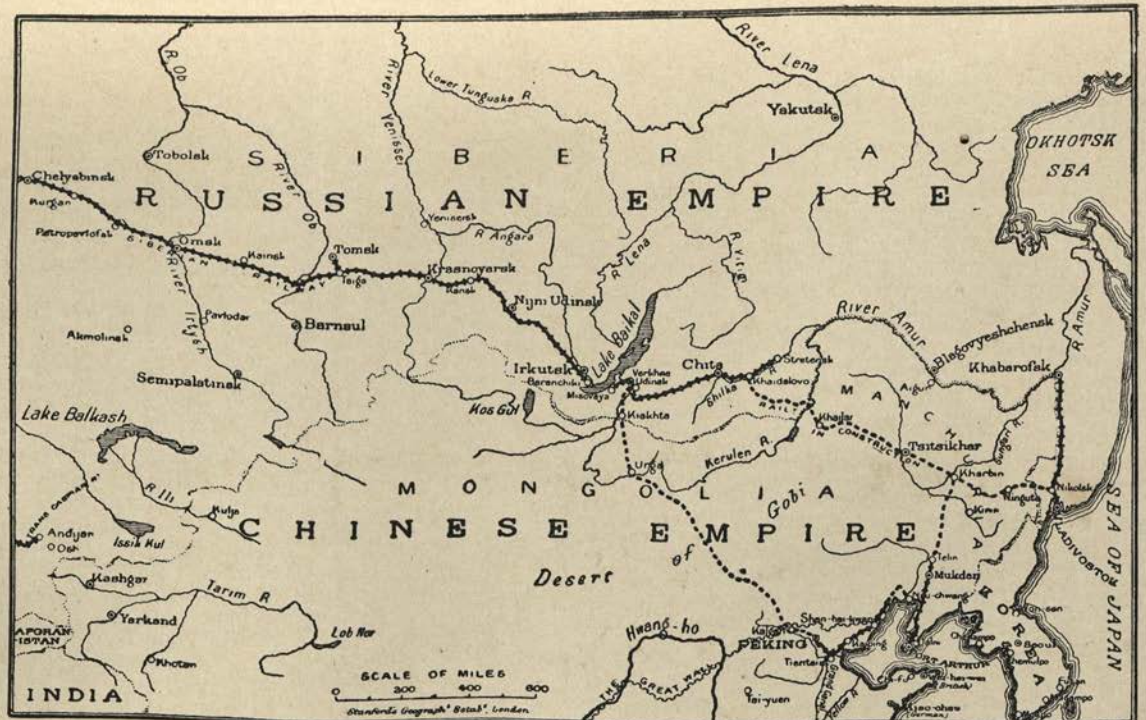
A PARTY OF RUSSIAN ENGINEERS IN THE PRIMEVAL FOREST

the upholstery is of soft leather, and all the walls are covered with a species of waterproof cloth, which is washed at the end of each journey. The difference between this and the cloth and plush upholstery of other trains, which soil you at every touch, and fling clouds of pestilent dust into the air, is indescribable.

The Siberian Express, however, shows more improvement than this. In the roof of each compartment are two electric lights, one of which is extinguished when you pull the curtain over it at night. There is also a table lamp hanging on the wall, which can be placed anywhere, and an excellent movable table. With these two you can read and write in perfect comfort. Above your head are two levers: one admits fresh air, through wire gauze to keep out dust; the other turns hot water into the heating apparatus. There is a pneumatic bell to the restaurant and an electric bell for the servant. The beds are wide and very comfortable, and the whole of your luggage goes in the racks overhead. In the corridors are more ingenious filter-ventilators, and outside the windows are plate-glass flanges, so that you can look ahead without the danger of a spark entering your eye. Overhead, in the little central salon and in the dining-car, is an elaborate ventilator to be filled with ice from outside in summer, so as to admit cooled air. The corridor also contains a frame to hold a large printed card showing the name of the next station, the time of arrival, and the length of the stop. Finally, there is the other advantage which the first-class passenger enjoys. There are no brakes on his carriage! There is no hand brake, as on every other part of the train, and the Westinghouse passes underneath him in its pipe. He is thus undisturbed by the grinding and jolting which even the best-regulated brake produces, and can read and sleep peacefully through stoppages and down grades and hostile signals. This is surely the height of railway consideration. Such luxury, however, it is perhaps needless to add, speaks volumes concerning the speed of the Siberian Express.

This train is the result of study by Russian engineers of the railways of Europe and America. It may therefore be regarded as the fixed type of the Siberian carriage, and I have described it in detail, because before we are many years older the Siberian Railway will be one of the great passenger routes of the world.

After much praise I may venture upon a little criticism.



Map Showing the Eastern Section of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

(Proposed termini indicated.)

Russia has in this train gone somewhat ahead of herself, so to speak. It is not enough to build a fine train—you must educate in knowledge, and more especially in responsibility, the people who are to work it. The dining-car, for example, will not bear a moment's comparison with that of the Orient Express or the Riviera Express. We waited interminable times for our meals. One passenger sat at table fifty minutes, having had nothing but a plate of soup and being unable in all that time to obtain a bottle of beer. Then he left the car in disgust, and in a loud voice demanded the complaint book. Result: he was snowed under with apologies and waited upon like a prince. If the dining-car were properly arranged, it would hold all the passengers. As it is, one has to intrigue and struggle for a table. Again, not once after we left was one of the station and time cards put in the frame. All the pneumatic bells, too, were out of order, and no waiter could be summoned. When I ordered a bath I was told that the pipes were inexplicably stopped up. There are other matters I might mention, and it is only fair to add that some of the shortcomings are the fault of the passengers themselves, who are not yet educated to the use of the facilities so lavishly provided for them. A needless inconvenience is that all the lavatory arrangements of the train are shared by the two sexes, with consequent delays and embarrassments. The greatest disturbance, however, to the foreign visitor's comfort is that al Western mealtimes must be abandoned before a Russian's daily food-scheme. No Russian has an exact sense of time, the lack of it being probably attributable to the Orientalism in his blood. Nobody, indeed, could have one on this train, for the clock keeps the hour of St. Petersburg for a thousand miles or more of due eastward travelling, in order that its time-table may have some semblance of utility and conformity; then as the days pass the train itself grows ashamed of such a childish pretension, and after Chelyabinsk it leaps lightly to local time and hurls a couple of useless hours out of the window, so to speak—hours that make no record, either

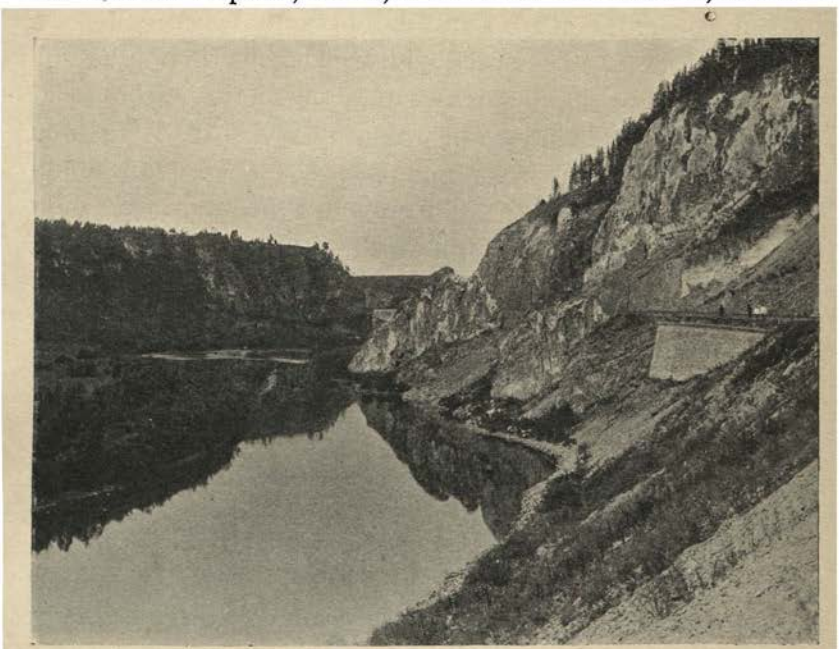
of weal or woe, against any of us—two sinless hours, two joyless, tearless little hours flung forth upon the brown Siberian steppes. As for a Russian's meal-times, he simply has none. If I had my tea early there would be the invariable nameless official in his dark-blue uniform piped with green or blue or magenta cloth, with crossed pick-axes or hammers or bill-hooks on his collar and cap, finishing a *hâchis* made into the shape of a cutlet—futile masquerade !—or thoughtfully spitting out the bones of a fried carp upon his plate while he selected a fresh mouthful with his knife. When we dined or supped they would be drinking tea, and once when we went into the restaurant-car for a sandwich about midnight a party of rugged-looking men—not officials, for once, but of occupations which their strange faces did not allow us to presume—were sitting round an empty *cafetière* drinking champagne from tumblers, a saucer in front of them piled high with the cardboard mouth-pieces and ashes of many dozen cigarettes. This habit of eating when you are hungry and eating whatever you may happen to fancy, instead of eating when the cook wills, and then only what custom severely restricts you to, is disorganising in its effects upon the refectory of the train. There is no time to sweep up and set tables ; no time when the servants can feel free to rest, sleep, or eat ; no time when the wearied kitchen fire can "go down" as it does at home. The result is great discomfort for Western passengers, and the authorities should certainly insist upon all meals being served at fixed hours, and at those hours only.

The story of the inception of the Great Siberian Railway has been told many times (in my own "Peoples and Politics of the Far East," for instance), and all that need be recalled here is that the first suggestion of it came from an Englishman, and that enterprising Americans were the first to lay before the Russian Government a definite offer to build it on certain terms. Naturally enough, Russia decided that it must be her own task, but

THE TOP OF THE URALS—THE WATER-PARTING BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA

it was a long time before she could face the tremendous expenditure involved, and not until her statesmen's keen foresight perceived the vast change coming over the Far East was the gigantic enterprise reduced to a definite project. The present Tsar, when as Tsesarievich he was travelling in the Far East, wheeled the first barrow and laid the first stone of the railway at Vladivostok on May 19, 1891, and his enthusiastic support has assured the success achieved. The speed with which construction has followed is, considering the great natural difficulties, without parallel in railway-building. The whole line was divided into seven sections, and work carried on upon them so far as possible simultaneously. The Siberian plain presented no engineering difficulties, since for a thousand miles the surface does not show a higher rise than four hundred feet; but as all wood, water, food, and labour had to be supplied from the base, the difficulties of organisation were very great. But the first portion, from Chelyabinsk to Omsk, 492 miles, was opened for traffic in December 1895; the second, from Omsk to Ob, 388 miles, in 1896; the third, from Ob to Krasnoyarsk, 476 miles, later in the same year; the fourth, from Krasnoyarsk to Irkutsk, 672 miles, in August 1898. Thus the rail-head reached a point 3371¼ miles east of Moscow, and as the train had also reached Khabarofsk, on the Amur, from Vladivostok, the eastern terminus, a distance of 475 miles, in the same month and year, a total of 2503 miles of railway had been laid and opened for traffic in seven years. The Siberian Railway will cross altogether thirty miles of bridges, and of these the line to Irkutsk required a large number, including such important ones as those over the Irtysh at Omsk, 700 yards, over the Ob at Krivoshekovo, 840 yards; over the Yenissei at Krasnoyarsk, 930 yards, and over the Uda at Nijni Udinsk, 350 yards. Moreover, before reaching Irkutsk there is some very stiff grading work in a mountainous country. By this performance Russia holds the world's record for railway-building. She may well be proud of it.

The train leaving Moscow at 8.15 on Saturday evenings reaches Irkutsk—at least it did when I travelled by it, but the journey is being expedited so often that the time-table is seldom accurate for more than a month or two—at 7.15 in the morning of the Monday week—the ninth day. The average speed of the Siberian Express, which, it must be remembered, is much



THE RAILWAY IN THE URALS

greater than that of the ordinary train from Moscow daily for Irkutsk, is, therefore—allowing for the difference of time between West and East—almost exactly seventeen miles an hour, including stoppages. A few minutes' study of a condensed time-table will give the reader more information than much description. Here, then, is the journey at a glance :

VERSTS.*	STATION.	HOUR OF ARRIVAL.	DAY
	Moscow-Kursk Line.		
	Moscow	8.15 P.M.	Saturday
93	Serpukhof	10.54 P.M.	
181½	Tula	1.33 A.M.	Sunday
	Suzrano-Vyasemskaya Line.		
239½	Uzlovaya	4.03 A.M.	
382½	Riask	8.32 A.M.	
753	Penza	7.47 P.M.	
	GREAT SIBERIAN RAILWAY.		
	Samara-Zlataoust Section.		
1118	Samara	7.09 A.M.	Monday
1155½	Kinel	8.59 A.M.	
1609	Uia	10.25 P.M.	
1792½	Vyasovaya	4.48 A.M.	Tuesday
1908½	Zlataoust	8.49 A.M.	
	West Siberian Section.		
2059	Chelyabinsk	2.05 P.M.	
2299½	Kurgan	10.55 P.M.	
2548½	Petropavlovsk	8.00 A.M.	Wednesday
2805	Omsk	4.57 P.M.	
	Central Siberian Section.		
3382½	Krivoshekovo	4.18 P.M.	Thursday
3390	Ob	4.50 P.M.	
3605	Taiga (for Tomsk, 82 versts)	1.58 A.M.	Friday
3743	Mariinsk	7.34 A.M.	
3932	Achinsk	2.50 P.M.	
4099	Krasnoyarsk	10.30 P.M.	
4326	Kansk	9.09 A.M.	Saturday
4633	Nijni Udinsk	1.38 A.M.	Sunday
4742	Tulun	8.26 A.M.	
5108	Irkutsk	7.15 A.M.	Monday

* To turn versts into miles, multiply by .66

The condensation of this table is shown by the fact that on three days only two stations each are given, and on two days only one station. Between Samara and Irkutsk nineteen stations are mentioned above; in reality there are two hundred and six. Therefore, stoppages play a large part in reducing the speed average, and if the rate of progress were at all uniform, seventeen miles an hour would be a very respectable figure. But for the first thousand versts, as far as Samara, the line is an important one in European Russia, and the speed of the train averages twenty-two miles an hour. Then, when the Urals are passed, a speed of nineteen miles is kept up for a long distance over the straight stretches of the Siberian plain. From Omsk to Taiga, nearly another thousand versts, it sinks to fifteen or sixteen, and after Taiga it drops to twelve miles an hour or less. In fact, for the last 1500 miles of the long journey there was hardly a moment when I would not have backed myself to pass the train on a bicycle if there had been a decent road beside the track. And the present speed average will not be greatly increased until the whole line is relaid with heavier rails and solidly ballasted.

But, though it is possible to find fault with the speed, the cost of the journey is beyond even a miser's criticism. There is nothing in the world like it. A few years ago, when it was discovered that the people were not making sufficient use of the railways, the heroic decision was made to put railway travelling literally within the reach of every one. The zone system of charges was adopted, the tariff made cheaper the longer the journey, and the rates put at an astoundingly low figure for the whole empire. Irkutsk, as I have said, is 3371 miles from Moscow, and the journey thither occupies close upon nine days. The price of a first-class ticket is sixty-three roubles, and there are supplementary charges of 12.60 roubles for "express speed," 7.50 for the sleeping-berth, and three roubles for three changes of bed-linen *en route*. Total: 86.10 roubles; £9 2*s*.; $44.30. And this is for a train practically as luxurious as any in the world, and

incomparably superior to the ordinary European or American train. The second-class fare for the same journey is only £6, or less than $30, and the third-class passenger, travelling by the ordinary daily train, and spending thirty hours more on the way, can actually travel these 3371 miles for the ridiculous sum of about £2 14*s.*, or, say, $13.50. It is officially stated that the through ticket from Moscow to Port Arthur or Vladivostok will cost 115 roubles, about £12, or $59, and a ticket from London or Paris to Shanghai 320 roubles, about £33 17*s.*, or $165. The enlightenment which prescribes such fares should be reckoned to the credit of the Russian authorities, when we are noting down things to their debit.

In laying the Siberian line one great mistake was made—far too light rails were ordered. The rail-makers pointed this out when they made their contracts, but an unwise economy prevailed, with the result that already the traffic is heavier than the rails can carry, and minor accidents are consequently frequent. The present weight is a little over sixteen pounds to the foot, and, as the ballast is only earth or sand, and the rails are merely spiked to the sleepers, after a day's rain the trains, as somebody has remarked, run off the track like squirrels. This excuse, however, must be made for the authorities: when they planned the line they had no idea that traffic would develop as fast as it has done. In 1900 no less than 758,000 tons of paying freight were carried, and yet the railway was wholly unable to move all that was offered, and I saw small mountains of grain still awaiting transportation as late as in November.* It is now the intention to relay the

* "The gross income of the railway was reckoned in 1900 at 24.58 roubles [£2 10*s.*—$12.68] per 1000 car-axle versts (in 1899 it was 28.63 roubles [£3—$14.57]), as compared with 36.23 roubles [£3 16*s.*—$18.65] on all the other Government railway lines. This low gross revenue is attributed to the great quantities of troops, Government and railway stores that the line had to transport, at very low rates as regards the two first. The present gross revenue of the line is estimated at 5000 roubles per verst, or about £230 per mile."—Mr. Consul-General J. Michell's Report for 1900, *Annual Series*, No. 2708, page 18. The above equivalents within square brackets are my own, British Consuls not having leisure for such calcula-

rails over the whole line, and, as a beginning, the track from Ob to Irkutsk will be relaid as soon as possible, a sum of 15,000,000 roubles having been set aside for this purpose. The old rails will be used for fresh sidings, of which a large number, and over a hundred new stations, will be constructed. As a further striking example of the extraordinary development along this new railway, I may mention here that last year 1,075,000 passengers were carried, as against 417,000 in 1896. The stations themselves are admirable. Except the quite unimportant ones, where no settlement yet exists, and the engine stops only to take water, they are prettily designed, the chief ones of brick, the rest of wood, like Swiss châlets, and they are commodious in size. In no country that I know can such excellent food be had *en route*, and at every station there is a medicine-chest, and an official corresponding to a dresser in one of our hospitals, called a *Felscher*, capable of treating simple ailments and rendering first aid to the injured. For his services and medicine no charge is permitted to be made. My photograph on page 135 shows the water-tower and storehouse to be seen at every station, the latter being banked up to the roof with earth to keep out the cold. How severe this is may be judged from the fact that for a considerable distance on the Central Siberian section the earth never thaws, even in mid-summer, for more than two or three feet below the surface—a condition which makes it very difficult to find a solid foundation for buildings and bridge-piles. The line is watched by an army of men, no fewer than 4000, for instance, being employed between the Urals and Tomsk. One of these is stationed in his little wooden hut at every verst ; he stands at attention, flag in hand, as the train approaches, and it is his duty to step into the middle of the track as soon as the train has passed, and

tions. The Russian figures are doubtless accurate, but the concluding statement contains an extraordinary blunder. Five thousand roubles per verst equals about £797 10*s*., not £230, per mile. Inasmuch as 5000 roubles is roughly £500, and a verst is about two-thirds of a mile, it is not unreasonable to think that even a Foreign Office proof-reader might have detected so palpable an error.

hold up his staff as a signal that all is right. This figure may be observed in my photographs. Almost every one of these men—every one in Central Siberia—is an ex-convict or a *déporté;* yet although, as I shall have occasion to point out later, crime is rife in Siberia, and constitutes the chief drawback to the development of the country, I did not hear of a single offence committed by one of these men.

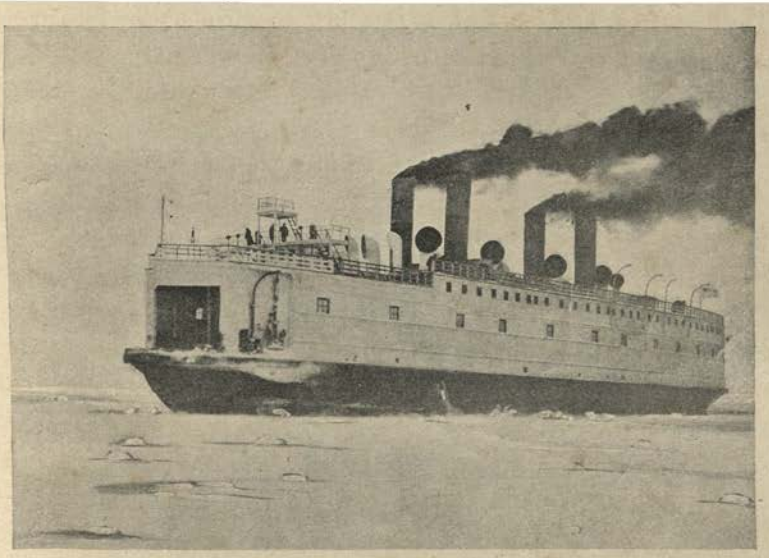
Beyond Irkutsk the railway was not yet open, but the line was in working order and the Governor-General, General Goremykin, was kind enough to give me a special train over it to Lake Baikal, and to place a Government steam-launch at my disposal on the lake. This inland sea has an area of over 12,000 square miles ; its water is brilliantly clear, its depth is enormous and in many places unplumbed, and the solid mountains run sheer down to its edges. The terminus is a station called Baranchiki, just where the Angara empties itself into the lake, and a long wooden jetty leads to the slip where the great ice-breaking, train-carrying steamer lies. The railway has now been begun round the southern end of the lake, though the cost of one hundred and fifty-five miles of line through such a country will be very great, but this Circum-Baikal section, the *Krugobaïkalskaya,* is considered essential for heavy traffic, to provide an alternative route if the steamers break down or cannot pass the ice, and not improbably to connect ultimately with a line direct to Peking.

The firm of Sir William Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. has built upon Lake Baikal one of the most remarkable steamships in the world, to ferry the Siberian trains across the lake, and in winter to break the ice at the same time. The *Baikal* was brought out in pieces from Newcastle-on-Tyne, and put together by English engineers, who have been living in this remote and lonely spot for over two years. I found three of these hard at work, the chief, Mr. Douie, and his assistants, Mr. Renton and Mr. Handy, and spent some very

interesting hours with them. They ought to be well paid for the fine work they were doing, for a more dreary exile can hardly be imagined. They lived at a little village called Listvenitchnaya, a nest of crime and robbery, crowded during the summer with innumerable caravans bringing tea from China. Every civilised person carries a revolver there, and two if he is of a cautious temperament. Nobody thinks of going out after dark, and every week somebody is robbed or killed. The whole population is ex-convict or worse. The boss of the labourers on the *Baikal* was in Siberia for outraging a child; the man who conducted me to where Mr. Douie and Mr. Renton were at work was a murderer from the Caucasus; a short time before my visit another murderer employed on the ship had tried to repeat his crime, and had been consigned to chains again; the very day I was there the police were looking for a man supposed to have obtained work in the yard, who was wanted for killing eight people, I was told, at one time. There are a few Cossacks at Listvenitchnaya, but they are wholly incapable, even if they have the desire, of coping with the turbulent place. It may be the best policy for the Russian Government not to hang its murderers, or keep its criminals in confinement, but to turn them loose in such places. There can be no excuse, however, for its failure to provide an adequate police force to control them, or for the preposterous tolerance which allows every man of these criminals to go about armed to the teeth. A few months before my visit they held up the mail-cart from Lake Baikal to Irkutsk, shot four of its five guards, and stole its gold. Some day they will hold up a train, and rob the passengers. Then authority will doubtless assert itself. I do not see anything to prevent such an act. In a place like this the English engineers have absolutely nothing to do or think about, except their work, and the long evenings of a Siberian winter, spent within fast-barred doors, must be inexpressibly dreary.

The *Baikal* is a magnificent vessel of 4000 tons, with twin

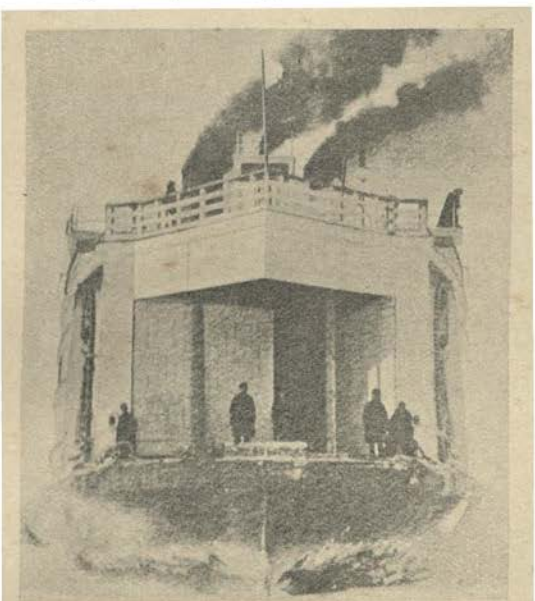
engines amidships of 1250 horse-power each, and a similar engine forward, to drive the screw in the bow; for the principle of the new type of ice-breaker is to draw out the water from under the ice ahead by the suction of a bow-screw, when the ice collapses by its own weight and a passage is forced through the broken mass by the impact of the vessel. As will be seen



THE STEAMSHIP *BAIKAL* STEAMING THROUGH THE ICE

from my illustrations, the first that have been published, the *Baikal* has extensive upper works, and these contain luxurious saloons and cabins. Upon her deck she carries three trains —a passenger-train in the middle, and a freight-train on each side. Her speed is thirteen knots, and on her trial trips she has shown herself capable of breaking through solid ice thirty-eight inches thick, with five inches of hard snow on the top—such snow is much more difficult to pierce than ice—and has forced her way through two thicknesses of ice frozen together, aggregating from fifty-six to sixty-five inches. In summer her bow propeller should be removed, and large propellers substituted for her

smaller winter ones; but so far the railway authorities have taken no steps to build a dock upon the lake, without which neither of these important changes can be effected, nor the steamer herself repaired if any mishap should damage her hull. Lake Baikal is frozen from the middle of December to the end of April, and there is also talk of laying a railway across upon the ice, as is done each year from St. Petersburg to Kronstadt; but probably all depends upon the success of the ice-breaking steamer.



BOW OF THE *BAIKAL* BREAKING THE ICE

If this accomplishes its purpose another similar vessel will be built, for obviously the entire Trans-Continental service would otherwise be staked upon one ship never getting out of order the whole season. The *Yermak*, however — the ice-breaker also built by Sir William Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. for service in the Baltic—has been such a splendid success, forcing her way through mixed ice twenty-five feet thick, that there is every reason to presume the *Baikal* will do her work equally well.

Upon the opposite side of Lake Baikal the starting station is Misovaya, thirty-nine miles from Baranchiki, and there the railway enters upon a great plateau and reaches its highest point in the Yablonoi Mountains at 3412 feet. This has been the most trying section of the line to build, and the last rail was

laid only on December 28, 1889. As originally announced, the intention was to continue the railway right through to Khabarofsk, whence trains have been running for some time to Vladivostok. But there is good reason to think that the Russian Government never really expected to have to do this, and was well aware that before the rest of the line could be finished an arrangement with China would permit her to carry the railway through Manchuria, thus not only giving her virtual control of this most valuable province but also greatly shortening the entire length. The route will, therefore, now be from Misovaya to Stretensk, 605 miles; by steamer, larger or smaller according as the water is higher or lower, down the Shilka and Amur Rivers, 1428 miles, to Khabarofsk; and thence to Vladivostok, 252 miles. Total distance from Moscow by this route, 4307 miles by railway, and 1467 miles by steamer.

The Boxer-rising has so disorganised and delayed everything connected with the Trans-Baikal section of the line that no through times can be accurately given. But previous to these disturbances it was officially stated that in summer the journey from Moscow to Vladivostok would, until the completion of the Manchurian lines, occupy about twenty days. Just before the Chinese commenced hostilities a friend of mine made the complete journey as quickly as possible—the railway not being yet organised for through traffic. With much courteous help from the authorities, and doing one long stretch in Eastern Siberia in a horse-box, his itinerary was as follows:

Vladivostok	May 17, 18
Khabarofsk	May 19, 20
Blagovyeshchensk	May 27–29
Pokovkhra	June 4–6
Stretensk	June 9–11
Baikal	June 15
Irkutsk	June 16
Moscow	(late) June 23

That is, the journey took thirty-eight days. But it will be noticed that no fewer than twenty days were spent on the Amur and Shilka Rivers, this dreary delay being due to the fact that shallow water reduced the rate of speed at times to next to nothing, and at other times stopped the steamer altogether. This was exceptional, even at this time of year, and allowing for the fact that the journey was against the current. Moreover, as I have explained above, this river journey is only a temporary expedient, to connect the two ends of the railway while the Manchurian railway is under construction, and it will be observed that the journey from Irkutsk to Moscow has been considerably shortened even since I made it a few months previously.*

The ultimate route will be from Misovaya, on Lake Baikal, to Khaidalovo, a short distance on this side of Stretensk, thence

* The line from Khaidalova to the Chinese frontier, connecting the Siberian Railway with the Manchurian Railway, has been opened for traffic. Moreover, since this chapter was written, the last rail of the Northen Manchurian section was laid on November 3, 1901, completing the all-rail connection between Moscow and the Far Eastern termini, and by eliminating the river journey between Stretensk and Khabarofsk greatly shortening the through journey, in which there will now be only one change of cars (at Lake Baikal) between Moscow and Port Arthur (to which the branch from Kharbin is already open) or Vladivostok. This event has been announced by M. de Witte in the following address to the Tsar :

"On May 19, 1891, your Majesty, at Vladivostok, turned with your own hand the first sod of the Great Siberian Railway. To-day, on the anniversary of your accession to the throne, the East Asiatic Railway line is completed. I venture to express to your Majesty from the bottom of my heart my loyal congratulation on this historic event. With the laying of the rails for a distance of 2400 versts, from the Transbaikal territory to Vladivostok and Port Arthur, our enterprise in Manchuria is practically, though not entirely, concluded. Notwithstanding exceptionally difficult conditions and the destruction of a large portion of the line last year, temporary traffic can, from to-day, be carried on along the whole system. I hope that within two years hence all the remaining work to be done will be completed and that the railway will be opened for permanent regular traffic."

The Tsar replied as follows :

"I thank you sincerely for your joyful communication. I congratulate you on the completion within so short a time and amid incredible difficulties of one of the greatest railway undertakings of the world."

I may add that M. Lessar, the new Russian Minister to China, performed the through journey in twenty days, but for political reasons every effort was made to convey him to his post as quickly as possible.

across Manchuria to Nikholsk, sixty miles above Vladivostok, with a branch line from Kharbin, the centre of Manchuria, to Mukden, whence three other branches lead respectively to Niuchwang, Port Arthur, and Peking. The last of these is nominally built by the Russo-Chinese Banking Company, but this is a mere form of words—the whole line is as Russian as Moscow. The Manchurian Railway will be 950 miles long, and the southern branch 646 miles, and when all this is completed the total length of the Great Siberian Railway will be 5486 miles.

The following will then be the shortest route between the United States and the Far East *viâ* Siberia: New York, Havre, Paris (London passengers will go *viâ* Dover and Ostend to Cologne), Cologne, Berlin, Alexandrovo, Warsaw, Moscow, Tula, Samara, Chelyabinsk, Irkutsk, Stretensk, Mukden, Port Arthur, and the total length of this journey (excluding the Atlantic) about 7300 miles, of which 297 miles will be in France, 99 miles in Belgium, 660 miles in Germany, 2,310 miles in European Russia, and about 4000 in Asiatic Russia. These are the official figures.

One other possibility must be mentioned—it is always unsafe to say that any Russian plan is final—namely, that the whole direction of the Trans-Baikalian line will once more be altered, as I have suggested above, and that a line will be run due south-east from Irkutsk to Peking along the old caravan road through Kiakhta, and across the desert.

This would again enormously shorten the through journey; there are no insuperable physical difficulties; if China is coerced into consenting while England still has her hands full in South Africa, and Japan remains passive, there will be no political obstacle; and the political and strategical results will be infinitely more important than the commercial ones, for it will give Russia definite control over the whole of Northern China. But this, unless a wiser diplomacy arises meanwhile, might mean war with

England and Japan, sooner or later, whether America strikes a blow for her trade or not.

Finally, the Siberian Railway is officially estimated to cost, when completed, 780,000,000 roubles (£82,500,000—$401,362,000), of which 500,000,000 roubles (£53,000,000—$257,283,000), were spent by the end of 1899, and 130,000,000 roubles (£13,745,000—$66,893,000) were allocated to the work of 1900. From what I saw, I concluded that the official estimate will be largely exceeded. Before this gigantic enterprise is finished it is not likely to cost much less than £100,000,000 ($500,000,000).

Since the Great Wall of China the world has seen no one material undertaking of equal magnitude. That Russia, single-handed, should have conceived it and carried it out, makes imagination falter before her future influence upon the course of events. Its strategical results are already easy to foresee. It will consolidate Russian influence in the Far East in a manner yet undreamed of. But this will be by slow steps. The expectation that the line would serve at a moment of danger, or in pursuit of a suddenly executed *coup*, to throw masses of soldiers from Europe into China, is yet far from realisation. The line and its organisation would break down utterly under such pressure. But bit by bit it will grow in capacity, and the Powers which have enormous interests at stake in the Far East, if they continue to sleep as England has done of late, will wake to find a new, solid, impenetrable, self-sufficing Russia dominating China as she has dominated, sooner or later, every other Oriental land against whose frontier she has laid her own.

CHAPTER VIII

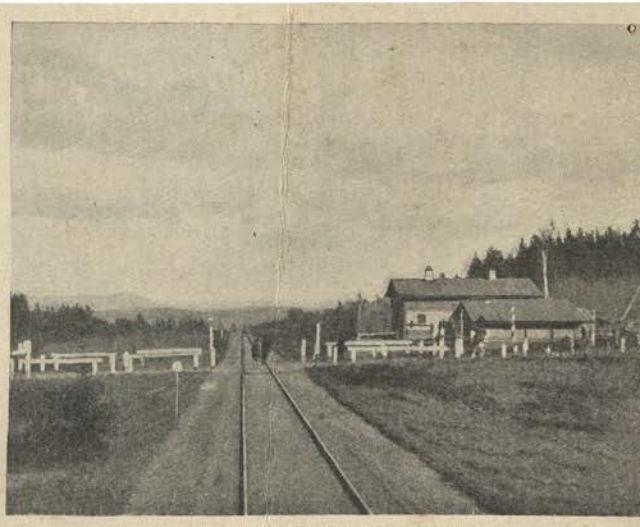
SIBERIA FROM THE TRAIN

TO Siberia! The mere name still causes a shudder. An ice-bound land, inconceivably remote, a few miserable, lonely towns, the endless tramp of the chain-gang, the horrors of the prison and the mine, the bark of the wolf-pack in the forest, banishment, despair—that is Siberia as most people have been taught—often maliciously—to imagine it. A land where spring blazes with flowers, as nowhere else, thousands of square miles of golden grain, an unimaginable wealth of minerals, forests beyond computation, a network of great waterways without parallel, all to be seen from a drawing-room on wheels, with servants and tea and cigarettes ever at your elbow, and an official invitation to complain if the temperature rises or falls more than a few degrees—that is a much truer picture. Between the rose-colour and the horror there is a mid-stratum of plain fact of much interest and importance to the world, and I will try to describe a journey through Siberia as it actually is.

I left the train blazing out of Moscow station, amid cheers and tears. Every one is tired with leave-taking, and most passengers are facing a long absence from home. So, in response to an early summons, a big Tatar, in blue linen blouse, with a twisted scar upon his forehead which suggests contact with some fierce crooked Eastern blade, comes in and makes up the broad bed in a manner very neat and prompt; the book of statistics of Russian commercial activities slips from the foreign traveller's hand, a last effort disconnects the electric lamp and pulls the blue silk curtains over the twin roof-lamps, and so, wrapped in

a cloudy maze of anticipations and rocked softly by the murmur of the wheels of the Siberian Express, he falls on sleep.

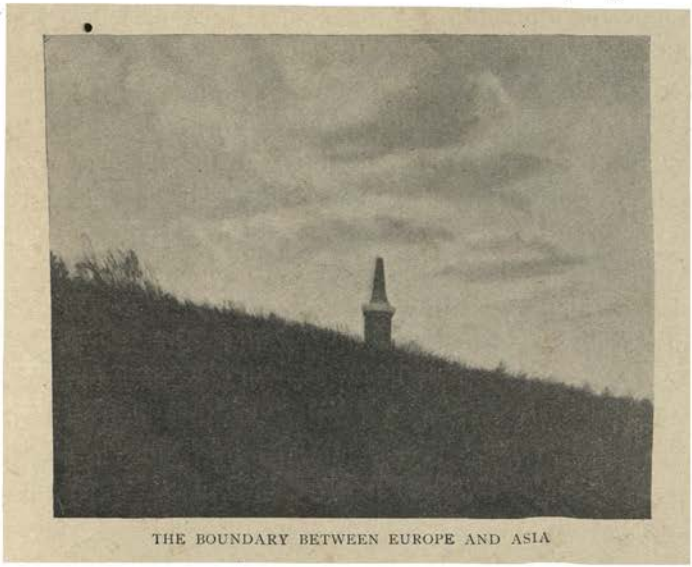
Morning shows a country mostly flat as a billiard-table, patched with fields of corn-stubble, with stretches of emerald-coloured winter rye and intervals of birch forest, scattered over with grey-roofed villages—little, flat, shed-like houses all huddled to-



THE LAST STATION IN EUROPE

gether and reminding one of the kind of grey scab that clusters and spreads on the back of a diseased leaf. There is nothing of the industry and economy of French cultivation, nor of the rich farmyards and sleek herds of England, but the soil is tilled everywhere, and the harvest is gathered and sold. Enormous stacks of straw testify to the abundant harvest of this season. All the houses are of wood, grey with age, often dilapidated, the wide roads straggle through them, mere mud-tracks in rainy weather, and there is almost always a white church with a green roof. But never a superior house, never the residence of some one well-to-do. These villages have no squire and no Lady Bountiful. Without exception they exhibit one dull level of poverty, one

unbroken record of toil which just keeps a roof and a fire and finds a meagre sustenance. The price of wheat is very low, for want of transport, and the middle man—a Russian, not a Jew—pockets most of the profits. As we get farther east we pass more prosperous cólonies of Bashkirs, one of the many strange native races scattered over Eastern Russia. Here is agriculture



THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA

in its most primitive aspect. Half a dozen shaggy little horses, tied head and tail, trot briskly in a circle, knee-deep in wheat, and in the middle stands the peasant with a whip, urging them on like the ring-master in a circus. There is no need to muzzle the beast that treadeth out the corn; he is kept moving so fast that he never has a chance to lower his head. Near by is a similar ring, where a man is winnowing by the simple method of tossing great shovelfuls of the grain into the air, and the chaff sails away in clouds. Much of this grain goes to the windmills which cluster round the little towns. One of these, Morchansk, has hundreds within the space of a few acres, all turning busily in the light wind. The peasants hereabouts have a curious superstition which

prevents them from selling their wheat except as flour. They believe that if they sell the grain they lose the vitality of the seed for their next sowing. Superstition, indeed, is encountered in Russia at every step. In this very town of Morchansk, for instance, only a few years ago, a wealthy merchant was found to have a secret iron-barred cellar deep under his house, where the shocking mutilations of the *Skoptsi* sect, of which I spoke in an earlier chapter, were perpetrated. They were all sent to Siberia, where they are very likely making new converts.

We are making nearly thirty miles an hour, express speed in Russia, for the line here is well laid and well ballasted. We are still in Europe and on a main line. At the tail of the train, common to both first and second class passengers, is an observation car with four arm-chairs and a few folding-stools in it, where, while the day passes and we find ourselves more and more fascinated as the landscape eliminates useless details from itself and settles down to a few very elementary and persistent traits, we spend much time. The vast agricultural plain is at last broken by the expanse of the Volga, a mile wide at low water and four miles when the river is in flood, which we cross at Batraki by the magnificent Alexandrofski Bridge, with its thirteen enormous spans. It is close upon a mile long, but even with this length the river has to be squeezed together by a three-mile dam before it can be crossed. Then the town of Samara, the junction of the great railway and the great river, then over another bridge across the Ufa River, and the climb over the Ural Mountains begins.

Russians had raved to us about these mountains, but the truth is that Russians are not good judges of mountains—as, indeed, how should they be, when in the whole of European Russia there is no land as high as the Washington Monument? Those in whom the Urals excite immoderate enthusiasm can never have seen the Tyrol and do not know the Grampians. Let it be said at once that the Urals cannot hold a pine-knot to either.

Where the firs clothe them closely, the hills seem to be wear-

ing a mantle of rough green frieze, but presently larches, yellowing fast in this perfect October weather, burn like flambeaux among the green, and beside the shallow river, wimpling over its stony bed, and through the fords of stepping-stones built curiously in a fork shape, the purple thicket of bare alder-twigs

THE TOWN OF ZLATAOUST FROM THE RAILWAY

makes planes of soft, quiet colour. Your fir or pine *en masse* is an inartistic tree; the repetition of his even points becomes tiresome, and he gives the outline of the mountains a line regular as the teeth of a comb, which should be the despair of the painter. Therefore painters wisely let these fir countries alone.

In a few places, at the water-parting, which occurs near the town of Zlataoust, the pine gives way and the greystone triumphs where a few points, the highest of any in this southern end of the

chain, rise bare against the sky. A little stir among the engineers, who courteously desire that I shall lose nothing, causes me to glue myself to the window and stare into the forest in my desire not to miss the frontier-post, the actual definite spot, beyond the station of Urjumka, where Europe ends and Asia begins, the only place, except one other in these same mountains and one in the Caucasus, where Europe and Asia are joined by railway. It has been marked, as we presently see, by a little uninspired monument, some ten feet high, in yellow freestone. It is a simple base with a stone-built, pointed column on the top—the sort of thing you may find behind some trees in the park of a nobleman, raised to mark the resting-place of his favourite fox-terrier. I do not detect any inscription upon its front, as the train passes at such a speed that to photograph it I have to set my shutter at the hundredth part of a second, with the result you see. Indifferent, the passengers barely interrupt their endless tea and talk and cigarettes, but we are silent, thoughtful, oppressed, fraught with vague realisations of the significance of this bit of earth; idly we compose, with feelings that should thrill a Russian, but are, save for our sense of the sentiment, alien to us, the legend that might be cut upon this fateful pillar. Russia, who has not looked back, here first pushed her plough beyond the last limit of Europe. Here she girded herself for that long and bloody march across the Asian plain; what a journey, how long since begun, how strenuously pursued, how rich in human incident, how bitter with human suffering! Here passed her trains of chained convicts—convicts whose tears made Europe weep; here, even here, defiled the long line of exiles, reft from their homes to make warm a spot in Asia for the coming thousands. Here passed the Poles, a hundred years ago, when Russia first took up that burden on her western border—the burden that has meant riches and industrial expansion to her ever since—many thousand of them went this way. Here she held her Cossacks, always in harness of war, hurrying the laggard and the fugitive. Here,

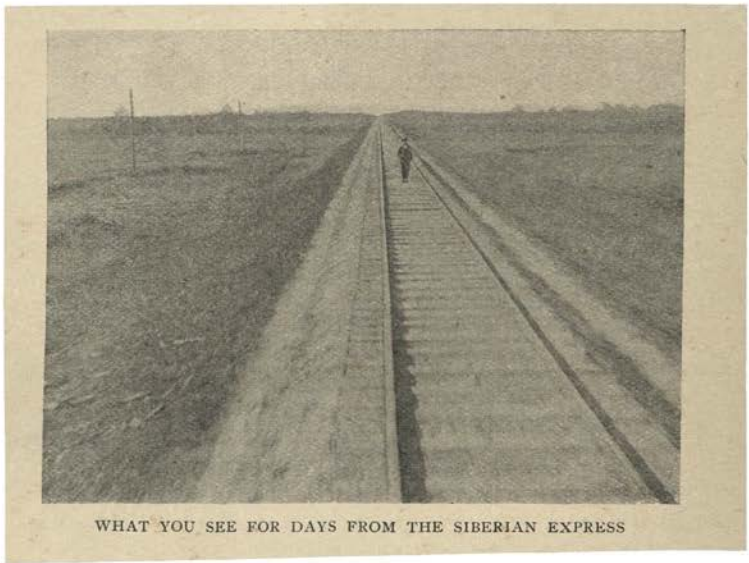
to-day, when so much has been done and said and suffered, so much spent and lost and gained, here passes this emblem of her success, carrying an earnest, even to the confines of China, of what she has done and what in the future she means to do—the Great Siberian Express. No, on second thought there is no room on that monument, nor yet space on the broadest hillside

GOLD-DIGGERS WAITING FOR THE TRAIN

of her forgotten boundary, to write the story that surges to the surface of one's imagination.

The Urals produce, as everybody knows, most kinds of precious stones and vast quantities of iron. The centre of the mineral industry is at Zlataoust, twenty-four hours beyond Samara. A lovely glimpse of the town itself is caught after leaving the station. Built in a valley, it surrounds part of a large artificial lake which was produced by damming up the little river to supply water-power to its foundries. This was not a success, and Zlataoust must for ever look out upon an expensive failure, which nevertheless constitutes its chief attraction as a town. Almost before the train stopped, our passengers were clustering round three kiosks on the platform, where a thousand little objects in black iron, all of unspeakable ugliness, were for sale as souvenirs.

An enthusiastic engineer showed me the walking-stick he had bought of "vrai acier," but, unfortunately, when he bent it double on the platform to show the trueness of its metal, the resilience of its spring, it remained in a disheartened curve, no better than a wilted dahlia-stalk. There is sure to be a bayonet factory at Zlataoust. At Chelyabinsk, however, four hours later, on the



WHAT YOU SEE FOR DAYS FROM THE SIBERIAN EXPRESS

eastern verge of the Urals, the platform output was charming: pink, red, and green jasper, shining rock crystal, lumps of malachite that had been suddenly cooled off while boiling (when the world was made), of the vivid verdigris-green that is like nothing else. The palaces and galleries of St. Petersburg and Moscow are full of vases and tables and basins of these jaspers and lapis lazuli, and nothing could be more beautiful if only the makers would follow classic shapes instead of choosing as their models the stucco horrors of the suburban garden, or of inlaying tables with diamond-work in contrasting colours which ape the patchwork bed-quilt of the cook's aunt. But the little ash-trays in cloudy rose jasper, polished only on one side, are the best pre-

sents to bring back to friends who have been very good, as a memento of that town where convicts and exiles used to be gathered in enormous sheds and sorted over before being drafted to places where their labour was required or where their vices—when they had any—would remain unheard of. To-day every spring sees huge crowds of peasant emigrants to Siberia, undergoing ex-

THE WATER-TOWER AND STOREHOUSE AT EVERY STATION

amination and selection at Chelyabinsk before being distributed according to a regular scheme of colonisation.

From Chelyabinsk onward the train crosses the great Siberian plain, and this may be said to continue as far as Tomsk, more than seven hundred miles away. From Wednesday noon till Friday morning, except for the rivers you could hardly tell one piece of the monotonous landscape from another. But the more you see of it, the more it appeals to you. Infinitely simple in its long, sunburnt expanses to right, to left, and behind the train, dotted sparsely with meagre beasts which may be dromedaries, may be oxen, may be horses ; broken by tracts of bog where silver birches, very old and very small, struggle for their life ; flecked here and

there at wide intervals by a wooden hut or the rounded tent of a Khirghiz; cut through by winding sandy ways where carts move like flies in October, faint and slow—yet there is something singularly winning about this landscape, even though the pathos of miles of purple heather and grey and black moorland is wholly missing.

For an idea of the monotony of this part of the journey I must refer the reader to my photographs. Words will not describe it. Several times for more than an hour the track is perfectly straight—without even the suggestion of a curve. A cannon-ball fired from between the rails would fall between them a dozen miles away, if the aim were true and the trajectory faultless. There is positively one stretch where the line is as straight as a plumb-line for nearly eighty miles, and it should be easy to imagine the hypnotic effect of sitting in the middle of the observation-car and watching the twin lines of steel unroll themselves from under your feet, and roll away again out of sight over the edge of the world, till day passes, and sunset, flooding the plain with gold and scarlet and purple, receives them into its blazing abyss. What a horizon, what a sense of space and detachment! The mind breathes, the dust of great cities is a cloud nothing like so large as a man's hand, and everything is far away, except to-day and yesterday, which in the desert and the steppe are the same, one with another.

In these early days of October the great blossoming of the plain is over for the year. East of the Urals there is no oak, nor ash, nor elm, nor hazel, nor apple, to people the landscape, and no autumn-flowering plant blooms beside the way, only an infinite variety of reeds, and where the fine natural hay was taken in June, a crop of tall weeds, stark and brown, their heads still holding up the empty seed-vessels, architectural in their exact branchings. Sometimes in the black, shallow cutting beside the track, whence the ballast had been digged, I saw certain bulb-rooted plants with round whorls of leaves that should have shel-

tered either a lily or an orchid spike this summer, and once or twice a big bulrush—at least, that rush which suffered an æsthetic renaissance in England under this name, and is not a bulrush at all—stood up very high. Already a cocoon-like fluff was taking the place of the close brown velvet covering, and he was soon to seen freely—the familiar sacrifice of the individual in the interest of the species. He will not be there, that brown velvet bulrush, when I return from Irkutsk in a month, but then—the

THE REGULAR SIBERIAN STATION

widespread rushy hopes of next summer! Not only bulrushes, but every kind of high-water grass and reed, the whole gamut from grass to bamboo, wave and whisper and whistle in wide beds. At last you have under your eye the real country for the Marsh-King's Daughter. Hans Andersen, who knew marshes as no one before him or since, who has left in every teachable mind that reads him some enduring sense of their poetry, would have loved this part of Siberia. What romance could he not have written of these bowed birches, "the white ladies of the

forest," with stems of silver, here positively frost-white, and fine purple twigs weeping evenly to the northward. He would have peopled these thickets of black alder with a weird water-life. And suddenly, after days of it, in a second it is swept away; alder, birch, willow, and reed-bed alike disappear, and, as though planted by the hand of man in a straight line across this worldscape, the Siberian cedar, to be readily mistaken for an ill-nourished fir-tree with a yellowish tinge about the needles, springing from a rich madder-coloured bed of heath and heather, usurps the scene. It is after twelve o'clock by local time; enter the Siberian cedar at some mysterious nature-cue, *exeunt* birches and the rest that have followed us so faithfully from the western verges of Russia. We are now to have nothing but Siberian cedar all day.

For a thousand versts this Siberian plain hardly changes its character. The silver birches are always by our side, and sometimes the woods take on a more solid shape. Round the settlements herds of black and white cows graze, and for a few miles we pass through stubble fields, and great heaps of grain, in sacks, covered with tarpaulins, are piled up at the stations awaiting transport. But these oases of industry hardly count in the long monotonous steppe. Once a picturesque group of Tatars, come back from gold-washing, attracts attention, and again we see the devastated track of a forest fire. Occasionally we take a meal at a station, for the buffets are everywhere excellent and put to shame the wretched railway counters in the heart of populous England. The stations themselves are all beautifully built of wood, neat and clean, surrounded with pretty palisades, each having its water-tower and fire-engine house, and offering to the third-class traveller free boiling water for his teapot and cold boiled water to drink. We pass a train of convicts going to Irkutsk, all the windows barred with iron, and a sentry with fixed bayonet at the entrance of each carriage. By showing my official letter to the colonel in command I get permission to pass through the train. The prisoners consist of convicts, in chains, and simple

exiles, the wives and children of the latter accompanying them. Their accommodation is warm and comfortable, and except some of the convicts, who are obviously savages, they seem in good spirits. Several times, too, we meet trains of returning colonists, who have either been to Siberia for the harvest, or are returning disappointed and dissatisfied. This latter category includes a regular percentage of all who emigrate voluntarily.

The vast agricultural plain is, of course, the predominating impression left by this journey; indeed, there is no other such

SIBERIAN PEASANTS WATCHING THE TRAIN

plain in the world. Statistics of the size of Siberia may be found in every book of reference, but it is impossible not to reproduce some of them when describing a journey through the land. It is, then, over 5,000,000 square miles in area, half as large again as the whole of Europe; it covers 32 degrees of latitude, and no fewer than 130 degrees of longitude; it possesses a magnificent series of rivers running with fan-like branches north and south, with a total navigable length of 27,920 miles; some

of these rivers have been proved to be easily navigable with care from the Arctic Sea, and so astonishingly complete is this natural network of waterways that, with the aid of one canal, steamers of a considerable size have been built in England and taken under their own steam to Lake Baikal, nearly 3500 miles east of Moscow. The zone of colonisation lies to the south of 64 degrees north latitude, for above this is the zone of polar *tundra*—a wilderness of marsh and moss, with stunted bushes for its only vegeta-

BUILDING A HUT IN THE TAIGA

tion, frozen during the greater part of the year, and incapable of supporting any life except that of the scattered tribes of Arctic natives who roam about and manage not to perish in it. But south of this there is in Western Siberia alone a cultivable area of six thousand geographical square miles.

The landscape changes a third time between Moscow and Irkutsk. This is at Taiga, whence a branch line of fifty-four miles leads to Tomsk. The word *Taiga* means primeval forest. A couple of years ago this place was but a name and a stopping-place for the trains; to-day it is a smart little town and growing fast. Beyond it the line plunges into the virgin woods. The

first passenger train left it, eastward bound, on New Year's Day, 1899, and the bridge at Krasnoyarsk was only finished in March of the same year, permitting trains to proceed without a break to Irkutsk, the present terminus. Our train has no longer an engine with air-compressor for the Westinghouse brake, therefore our speed, never great, dwindles to a crawl, and for nearly a thousand miles, from Friday till Monday, we dawdle along, almost always through an unbroken forest of silver birch, pine, larch and cedar, with occasional clearings and innumerable little stations. From the train only small timber is in sight, but back in the forest there is an inexhaustible supply of serviceable trees, and a special department has been recently created for the economic deforestation of these Siberian provinces, the outlet being a great timber port to be formed at the mouth of the Ob. At each station we make a long halt. They are charming places, admirably built, and prettily decorated, and round each of them a circle of civilisation is spreading. At last, at noon on Monday, nine days and 3371 miles from Moscow, after passing a zone of rolling country with Highland scenery, we come in sight of a large town encircled by a great river, its churches and public buildings visible from far away. This is Irkutsk, the end, for the present, of the Great Siberian Railway, the boundary of Eastern Siberia, the junction of Europe, so to speak, for trade by land with Peking, and not much more than a hundred miles from the frontier of China.

CHAPTER IX

SIBERIAN CIVILISATION

THE chief towns of Siberia are naturally still those that had grown up and flourished before the railway was constructed—Omsk, Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, and Irkutsk. Others will, of course, soon be created, and in several cases they will supersede the old ones. After a thousand versts of the Siberian plain, the first important station, Ormsk, is a genuine surprise. At dusk you pass over the great river with a well-lit passenger steamer plying upon it—pass over it by a handsome girder bridge. Then a promising network of sidings begins, and, after the manner of Siberian trains, you steal very slowly into the electric-lit station of Ormsk. A neat and pretty brick building greets you, the silent, impassive figures of peasants in sheepskins grouped about its doors. You pass into the usual hall which is waiting-room and restaurant combined; well-set tables with tall palms—imitation palms of course—standing in them, and tall crystal candelabra veiled in red muslin. At one side is the tea-counter, its brass samovar purring softly; at another a display of hot dishes to tempt the hungry, with a *chef* of smiling face and much-starched linen waving his knife above the baked meats. The proffered

THE TOWER OF THE FIRE-WATCH, IRKUTSK

THE CITY OF IRKUTSK

meal was so attractive that we took it here instead of in the restaurant-car, and nothing could have been better. The town of Omsk is only Tomsk on a smaller scale, and Tomsk has a mystery of its own. It was originally selected for the administrative and educational centre of Siberia, and its public buildings were erected on this scale. Its university is splendidly housed; it has an ambitious theatre; one of the three Government gold laboratories is there; the prison was the principal distributing station of Siberia; it is lighted by electricity; it is the focus of a great agricultural district; it has over 50,000 inhabitants; there was every reason to suppose that its happy development would be parallel with that of the railway itself. To-day it is going down-hill, for the simple reason that the railway is fifty-four miles away—a journey of five hours—and that even then the station is a long drive through the woods from the town. I heard many explanations of this extraordinary arrangement: that the land around the town was too swampy, that too costly bridges would have had to be built, that the engineers who laid out the line left the town aside because its inhabitants would not agree to certain conditions advantageous to the proposers. Which is true I do not know, but it is certain that Taiga, the station for Tomsk on the main line, was only a couple of tents in the wilderness three years ago, and that to-day it is a considerable settlement, growing rapidly into a town, destined beyond question to thrive at the expense of the city so proudly planned to be the heart of Siberia. Tomsk reminds one of a rapidly grown Western American town, except that it has several far finer permanent buildings. The streets are its least civilised characteristic, for, except in winter, they are either ankle-deep in dust or knee-deep in mud, and winter comes so suddenly that the townspeople sometimes wade through mud to the theatre and find the roads frozen solid when they come out, while by next morning there are thirty degrees of frost.

Omsk, to my thinking, will necessarily become the chief Si-

berian town, because of its magnificent waterways, its surrounding agriculture, its gold-mining, and, above all, its proximity to the colossal deposits of coal that have been discovered to the south of it, the copper-mines not far off, and the probability that some day a railway will run south-east from it to connect Siberia with Central Asia.

For the present, however, Irkutsk is a more important place, and indeed, at first sight, as it nestles within the embrace of the broad Angara, it is charming, and one is astonished at the proportion of imposing buildings rising from the flat brown mass of wooden houses. A second surprise is that the suburb where the station is situated is called Glascow. But when you drive away through mud a couple of feet deep, in which the droschky rolls about so alarmingly that people invariably ride with their arms about each others' waists, you fear that first appearances were deceptive. The streets, in fact, are awful, and the local paper of the morning after my arrival told how two little boys returning from school fell in the middle of the street and were only just rescued from drowning by some passing carters. Your first impression, however, returns and remains when you have seen more of this remote Siberian capital. It is an astonishing place.

Here are a few plain facts to begin with. Irkutsk has 51,464 inhabitants. It spends ten per cent. of its municipal income on primary education. It has five hospitals and thirty doctors. There is an astronomical and meteorological observatory, of which the magnetic observations possess peculiar importance. Its theatre, a handsome building of brick and stone, cost over £30,000. There is a museum, an offshoot of the Russian Geographical Society, with an extremely interesting ethnological collection, as well as almost complete collections of the birds and animals of the district. From its telegraph-office messages can be sent to any part of the world in any language, but I must add that a telegram sent to me from London on Monday was only delivered at midday on Friday. There is a perfectly

organised telephone service, and the outlying manufactories, one of them as much as sixty miles away, are all connected with the city by telephone. A fire-extinguishing service is excellently equipped with an English steam fire-engine among other apparatus, and I saw some smart drill. Finally, besides an imposing cathedral, Irkutsk boasts no fewer than twenty Orthodox churches, one Roman Catholic and one Lutheran chapel, two synagogues, and two monasteries, for in Siberia a greater religious tolerance exists than in Russia. That is not a bad list for a town which, until a few months ago, could only be reached

THE TECHNICAL SCHOOL, IRKUTSK

by an exhausting journey of several weeks, driving at full speed day and night.

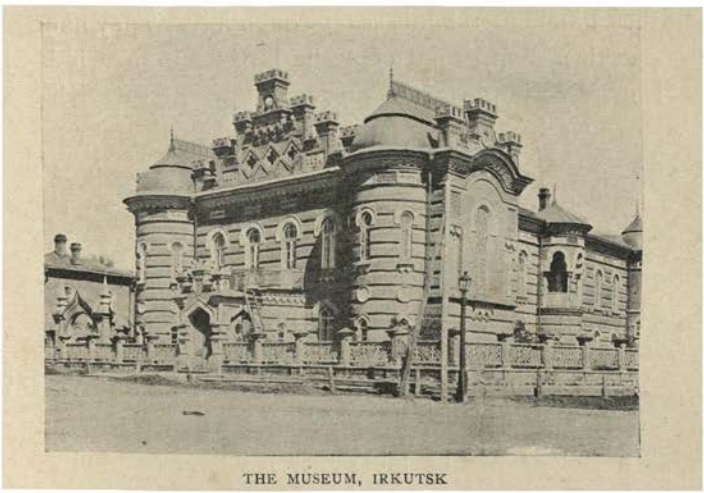
There is an air of well-being about the place, however, which says more than any catalogue of facts. I have seldom been more surprised than when, on the evening of my arrival, I started out to make a few purchases. I wanted some sardines and sugar and similar supplies, and I found myself in a shop which for size, arrangement, and variety of stock would compare with those of the West End of London, except, perhaps, such exceptional purveyors of luxuries as Morell's and Fortnum & Mason's. Next I wanted some photographic materials, and the first thing that caught my eye was a complete assortment of Zeiss lenses, of the latest pattern—the most expensive lenses in the market. Two

stationers' shops and a chemist's were certainly equal to the average of such places in any of the capitals of the world, and in another I saw such a stock of guns, rifles, revolvers, cutlery, and electric fittings as I have never seen in one place before. I should be at a loss where to look in London for such a selection of telephones, for instance, of every make and size, as were displayed in this Siberian shop. Such things would not be brought all these thousands of miles unless there were people who understood them and could afford to buy them, and it is this inference which causes the surprise. Similarly, the outsides of the houses, with their thick wooden walls and stoutly barred gates, do not suggest wealth and culture; but when you have passed some of these outer barriers you find yourself in homes which, for luxury and taste, are in no way behind rich men's houses elsewhere in the world, and where you are entertained with a hospitality as lavish and as elegant as that of Mayfair. These belong to men who have made great fortunes in Siberia and who are happy to remain there. They are generous men, too, and there are probably few towns of its size in the world with so many monuments of private beneficence in the shape of schools, hospitals, orphanages and the like.

Irkutsk, however, is not saved by its churches from an amount of crime, actual and potential, that would be considered excessive in a new mining-camp. The night before I arrived a church was ransacked of its plate; the night of my arrival the principal jeweller's shop was robbed; a few days later a flourishing manufactory of false passports—a peculiarly heinous crime in Russia—was raided by the police; the day I visited the prison a man clubbed nearly to death, who never recovered consciousness, was picked up in the street; a short time previously the mail, carrying gold-dust, had been ambushed and three of its armed guards shot; and no respectable citizen would dream of passing alone through its suburbs after dark. Indeed, people often fire a revolver-shot out of the window before going to bed, to remind whom it may concern that a strong man armed keepeth his goods. I do not know

how many police there are in this city of 50,000 people, but during the week of my stay I saw only two or three, and once, when I had to drive across the town at nine o'clock at night, I did not see a single living thing out of doors.

The principal shops and the best houses are all in one street, and as the side streets get farther from this they become poorer and rougher. There is something suggestive of China in long stretches of wooden walls and heavy gates. There are, of course, hundreds of Chinese about, and rows of Chinese shops, where



THE MUSEUM, IRKUTSK

the furniture, the clothing, the tea, and the various culinary and medicinal abominations dear to the Celestial mind are for sale. Stolid Mongols, too, hung with silver, have come through with their caravans from China, and every now and then you see a tired passenger stretched out in a tarantass amid his heterogeneous luggage, who has probably been driving day and night for a week or two, for Irkutsk is the focus of five great post roads. The hotel is a trial to mind and body, but a new one, the Metropole, is just completed and will apparently offer more civilised accommodation. Living is, of course, very dear, as everything, except meat and flour and beer—an enterprising German is coin-

ing money by brewing excellent lager—has to be brought so far by rail. One of my most interesting visits was to the Government Gold Laboratory, where the director was kind enough to have a special operation of weighing and smelting the dust carried out for my benefit. Gold is disposed of in Siberia in a wholly different manner from elsewhere. Every grain of it has to be sold to the Government, and heavy penalties attach even to the private possession of raw gold. But as "illicit diamond-buying" exists at Kimberley, so illicit gold-buying flourishes at Irkutsk, and the Chinese merchants are the offenders. They hang a few furs outside a shop, or put a few chests of tea in the window, but this is merely a blind, for they make big profits by buying gold-dust, in quantities from a pinch to a pocketful, and smuggling it across the frontier into China, where there has long been a great market for it at Blagovyeshchensk. The mines pay a small rent to the Government, and a varying percentage upon their output. Ordinary mines pay three per cent., more productive ones ten per cent., while those situated upon the Emperor's private property pay as much as fifteen per cent. In leather bags containing about a poud each (36 lb.), the dust is sent by mail, the post undertaking the insurance of each bag for about 14,000 roubles. At the laboratory it is weighed, mixed with borax, and melted in crucibles (Morgan's, one of the few things of British make I saw in Siberia), the ingots assayed and weighed, and an "assignat" for the value at Government rates, less the tax, a charge for laboratory fees, the cost of transmission to St. Petersburg, and a certain small margin, given to the owner. This "assignat" can be cashed immediately, or can be used as a bank-note. When a large quantity has accumulated, it is sent in a special waggon, under an armed guard, to St. Petersburg, and when the Irkutsk weights and assays have been verified, the margin is paid to the owner. The strong-room contained tier upon tier of bright ingots, weighing from a few pounds to more than I could lift. This treasure, it

seemed to me, was very insufficiently guarded, and when I remarked upon this to the Director, he told me that for a good many years a force of Cossacks kept watch every night, but since they once stole the whole contents of the strong-room a couple of civilian guards have been employed.

The laboratory at Irkutsk was built in 1870, and since that time it has received a total amount of 1,173,456 lb. avoirdupois of gold, or, I suppose, considerably over £60,000,000. There are

THE CATHEDRAL, IRKUTSK

three such laboratories in Russia, the others being at Tomsk for Central Siberia, and Ekaterinburg for the Ural district. In 1896 Russia produced 10½ per cent. of the gold of the world. Up to the present year, from 1754, when she began to find gold, she cannot have taken much less than £250,000,000 from her own, soil. The production of gold, however, is decreasing in Russia and in Siberia the richer mines are giving smaller returns. Against this must be set the discovery of valuable gold-fields farther north; the willingness of the Tsar to lease to private companies some of his own very valuable mines that have hitherto been very

inadequately worked; and the fact that the science of gold extraction has made such progress of late that the mines supposed to be worked out by the first-comers many years ago, can now be made to yield a handsome profit again. The chief difficulty in Siberian gold-mining is abour. There is no skilled, *personnel* to be had, and the conditions of life at points remote from civilisation are so disagreeable that labourers often leave as soon as they have amassed a small sum. I may add here my belief that Russia has secured in Mongolia a tract of extremely rich auriferous territory, but this is jealously held by a group of Petersburg capitalists, under official protection, and the foreign investor is not likely to secure an inch of it. But for the disturbances in China, I believe that these gold-fields would have been sensationally heard of before now.

POOR SIBERIAN PEASANT

Irkutsk, of course, is typical only of the civilisation of Siberia in the towns. The little settlements tell a different tale. Many of them are doing well enough as regards agriculture, but the extreme loneliness of the life, and the length of the winter, are producing

a peculiar Siberian type of people—silent, morose, inexpressibly sad. Among the lowest classes, too, these conditions, with the presence of so large a proportion of criminals, inevitably breed their own series of crimes. The future of Siberia, however, obviously depends upon the success or failure of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and this is a question asked with great earnestness in Russia and of almost equal interest elsewhere. Will it pay? Will this gigantic enterprise be a success—financial, commercial, strategic? Russians themselves are by no means unanimous in reply. There are those who declare that it will not only give Russia the ultimate mastery of Asia, but that it will also pay a handsome dividend. On the other hand, I have heard it called a white elephant, a huge humbug and a financial millstone. I may admit that I approached the railway with many prejudices against it. Some years ago I studied its beginning in Vladivostok; I have since been over the whole of the line that is open, and as far as Lake Baikal on the uncompleted section; and I had many conversations with engineers and officials closely connected with all parts of it. I have therefore some grounds for an opinion, and I have certainly come to the conclusion that the enterprise is of vast promise to Russia, and of equal significance to Europe, and to Great Britain most of all.

As regards the financial prospects of this gigantic railway any opinion as yet must, of course, be of the nature of a guess. It is fairly obvious that through passenger traffic will not pay at the very low rates now charged, while if the rates are raised to a paying standard they would be prohibitive to most passengers. Neither can through goods traffic be profitable, as few classes of merchandise, except tea, and perhaps silk, could support the cost of upwards of 5000 miles of railway transport, in competition with an alternative, if much longer, sea route. It is the enlightened policy of the railway authorities, moreover, to charge as little for goods proportionately as for passengers. For example, bar steel is carried from the Gulf of Finland to Krasnoyarsk, in

Siberia, say, 3300 miles, at the charge of about £3 per ton. This figure was given to me by an English merchant in Krasnoyarsk. Machinery between the same points costs £10 per ton. Such rates make for the development of the country, but not for the dividends of the railway.*

When we look at local traffic, however, a very different picture presents itself. Already the demand for transpoft far exceeds the supply. Acres of sacks of wheat lie piled up, waiting for the railway to take them away. Agriculture here is still in its infancy, yet in 1898, the latest statistical year, Siberia produced 1,000,000 tons of wheat, 730,000 tons of oats, 2,500,000 tons of grain of all kinds, and 325,000 tons of potatoes. Already last year 2500 American agricultural implements were sold in Siberia—more to the cultivated acre than in Russia ; McCormick's posters are in every village, and Deering machines have a strong foothold ; in Tomsk there is a central depôt where fourteen agricultural implement makers are represented. British firms, unfortunately, are conspicuous by their absence. I travelled for a time with the able and experienced representative of an American firm of agricultural machine manufacturers, who was delighted, and with good reason, at his prospects in Siberia. If the microbic fertilisation of land becomes a success, its influ-

* An attempt is announced to establish a connection between the Russian and United States Railways, *viâ* Bering Strait. A company called the Trans-Alaskan Railway Co. is stated to have been incorporated at Seattle, Washington State, with a capital of $50,000,000, its avowed object being the construction of a line through Alaska to some point near Cape Prince of Wales. Mr. Harry de Windt, the well-known traveller, who nearly lost his life on a similar previous journey, is said to be planning, with the assistance of the Russian and American Governments, to start from Irkutsk, in December 1901, for Yakutsk, 1800 miles by sleigh ; thence to Nijni Kolymsk, the most remote Russian settlement, where the population is chiefly composed of political exiles, another 1600 miles by reindeer teams ; and thence to the shore of Bering Strait, which is only about 36 miles wide at its narrowest point, and which he will cross either on the ice or in an American revenue cutter, returning to civilisation by the Yukon or Mackenzie River. Such a railway enterprise appears wholly chimerical, and it is incredible that the Russian Government should seriously contemplate it while so many more promising parts of Russia are in great need of railway facilities.

ence upon Siberian agriculture, where chemical manures are out of the question, will be incalculable. There is a new world of agricultural and mineral wealth waiting beyond the Baikal. A new railway, to connect the Trans-Siberian with the Trans-Caspian, will be built before many years elapse, bringing new supplies, creating new demands, and providing a new safeguard against famine. The gold output of Siberia, of which I have already given the striking figures, will be largely increased when the present mining laws are modified, and the mines thrown open to the improved methods and ampler capital of the West—a state of things which Russia is ready to welcome. At a place called Ebikastuz, near Pavlodar, to the south of Omsk, and only sixty-six miles from the great Irtysh River—to which a line of railway was finished two years ago, and three Baldwin locomotives sent—are coal deposits which an English engineer declared to me to be the largest in the world, a seam running for miles of the almost incredible thickness of three hundred feet. Vast quantities of coke will be produced here, shipped down the Irtysh to Tiumen, and thence transported to the Urals for the ironworks—a supply the importance of which will be appreciated by those who know anything about the iron industry. Near this are very rich copper mines, and it is certain that minerals will be dis-

PROSPEROUS SIBERIAN PEASANT

covered in other parts. The transportation of convicts to Siberia will shortly cease, and last year 223,981 emigrants of both sexes crossed the Urals, making a total of close upon 1,000,000 since 1893.

I have perhaps now said enough to justify in some degree my own belief that the development of Siberia is destined to be a handsome reward for the efforts and expenditure so lavishly devoted to it.

CHAPTER X

THE PRISON OF IRKUTSK

FROM gold, which H. E. General Goremykin, Governor-General of the Irkutsk Government—whom I must not forget to thank for all the facilities he afforded me—calls "the enemy of Siberia," it is a natural step to crime, and of course I spent some time at the famous prison of Irkutsk. It is a great, square, whitewashed brick building, surrounding a courtyard, with a number of smaller wooden buildings adjacent, the whole enclosed, except on the front, by an enormous wooden palisade of logs, twenty feet high, sharpened at the end. I went into every part of the prison that I could see, including the hospital, the workshops, the laundry, and the kitchens, and visited every one of the large rooms and almost every cell. In all these I saw but two things to find fault with—the practice of herding together criminals of all ages, tried and untried, and the long time, in some cases amounting to two years, which many of the prisoners spend there before their cases are finally judged. This latter evil is caused partly by the great difficulty of collecting evidence from many parts of Siberia, but chiefly because the central authorities do not supply magistrates enough to cope with the numbers of those arrested. An additional difficulty is the variety of languages spoken by the criminals themselves: three times during my visit was the governor, who accompanied me most of the time, obliged to send to another part of the prison for a prisoner to interpret a request made to him as we passed.

The prison is supposed to hold only 700 criminals, but it contained 1024 men on the day of my visit, 12 women, and 10 children accompanying their mothers. Of these no fewer than 621 were awaiting trial, 138 were condemned for definite periods not exceeding three years, which they will serve in this prison, and 286 were "in transit," mostly either to the great convict prison of Alexandrofsk, forty-six miles from Irkutsk, or to the island of Sakhalin. The convicts condemned to long periods or to Sakhalin had half the head shaved, as shown in the group photographed on page 160, and a number of the worst characters were in chains. The majority of the prisoners were there for theft, and robbery with violence; a number for unnatural offences, and several, in solitary confinement, for using forged passports, or two, for instance, who had exchanged identities and passports—a serious offence in Russian eyes. Two other men I saw separately confined were unidentified prisoners, who had no passports, and refused to say who they were, or where they came from, the natural inference being that they had something serious to hide. The cells were large, clean, and fairly light, and all the prisoners were dressed in loose coats and trousers of grey felt, with apparently such underclothing as they happened to possess. Those not separately confined were in long rooms, lighted by a row of small windows high in the walls, entered by one heavy door, and having down the middle a sort of enormous plank-bed, sloping from the middle down to each side. Upon this they slept in two rows at night, and sat during the day, for the space between the end of the boards and the wall was only just big enough to hold them all when standing up to receive an official visit. Four such wards did I enter, seeing perhaps six hundred prisoners of all ages, from youths to very old men, of all the nationalities which Russia contains, and charged with all the crimes in the code. Every one of these prisoners

was awaiting trial, and I was told that many of them would be there as long as two years. Certain considerations, however, may modify our disapproval somewhat. In the first place, these men are assuredly better clothed and housed and fed than they would otherwise be—indeed, at the approach of winter, a large number deliberately get themselves arrested. In the second place, the proportion of criminals in the whole population of Siberia is so very large, and the police are so few in number, and so lax, that the chances are much stronger against an innocent man being arrested than in more civilised regions. Thirdly, it was impossible to pass about among these men, looking carefully into their faces, and not to feel that it was better for Siberia that most of them should be where they were. When the door of one of the large rooms was thrown open and I was invited to step in among two hundred of them, I confess at first I hesitated. There were only four of us—the governor, the head-warder, the doorkeeper of the room, and myself, with nobody else even within hail, while in one case there were but two doors between them and the street, and an old man keeping watch. In an English prison those men would have been outside in a couple of minutes. Never has it been my lot, though I have visited prisons, civilised and uncivilised, in many parts of the world, to see human nature at such a low ebb, and the faces of these men, from wild beast to vacant idiot, haunted me for days. Guilty or innocent of any particular crime, they could hardly be other, with few exceptions, than a curse to society. From this point of view Russian criminology has a task unknown in countries where civilisation has reached a higher average development.

The convicts, curiously enough—that is, men condemned to considerable terms of hard labour before being set free as exiles, forbidden to leave the district to which they are

assigned—were on the whole of a rather better type, although they were disfigured by having half of the head shaved. Each man had a rough parcel of his personal belongings, and they were all strangely cheerful, considering their destination. Nothing, however, strikes an English visitor, who has seen the rigid military discipline of our own prisons,

INSIDE THE PRISON, IRKUTSK

A group of convicts to be "distributed"

so much as the good feeling, not to say familiarity, which prevails between the officials and the prisoners. The Inspector-General of the Prison, M. Sipiagin, who accompanied me, seemed to regard his charges rather as children than as criminals, and they behaved to him with the confidence, never wanting in respect, of school-boys toward a master. He never failed to remove his military cap, and say "Zdrasti!" (Good health!) when he entered a ward, and a simultaneous cry returned his greeting. As we walked up

and down, man after man stepped up to the inspector, asked him questions about themselves or their sentences without the least trace of fear or embarrassment, and even took him literally by the button-hole and turned him aside from us when they wished to make some private remark to him. One man going to Sakhalin produced a paper showing that he had a small sum of money to his credit in a prison in Moscow, and the particulars were noted down and orders given that this was to be sent after him. Another wished the doctor to examine him again before he started for Sakhalin; the Inspector spoke a word to his orderly, and later in the day I saw this man sitting at the hospital door awaiting his turn. Those who think that everything in the Russian prison system is savagery may say that all this was rehearsed for my benefit, but I am not a child in such matters, and I say that it was impossible to accompany M. Sipiagin on this tour of inspection and not to be struck by the entire absence of terrorism in any form. The Russian convict system has its terrible side, of which I am now more than ever aware, but there are few signs of it in a prison like that of Irkutsk. To find this nowadays one must look farther north and east.

There was no political prisoner there at the time; at least, I was assured that this was the case, and later I saw the official report for the day, in which no such prisoner figured. I saw a number of "politicals" elsewhere at various times, but they were all earning a good living as clerks and book-keepers. Of course I did not get as far as the terrible little town of Kolymsk, a thousand versts north of Irkutsk, where the worst political offenders are exiled to a living death. But from all I saw I was not surprised to learn that at the beginning of each winter an influx of minor offenders takes place into prison, where they get warm quarters, plenty of wholesome food, and no work. And as I have said, I saw

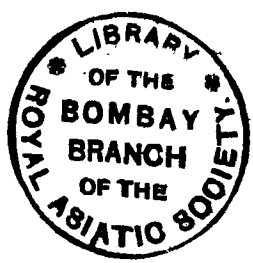
clearly that the Russian authorities have to deal with a stratum of population far below any that exists with us—a brutish, hopeless, irreclaimable mass of human animals.

A few figures will show to what an extent the human refuse of European Russia has been emptied into Siberia. In 1898—the latest statistics available—7906 men and 314 women were exiled to Siberia. These were voluntarily followed into exile by 1683 men and 3275 women. The first-named exiles were divided into classes as follows: 1281 men and 68 women condemned to hard labour; 128 men and 3 women sentenced to banishment; 52 men and 158 women simply deported; and 3848 men and 3 women, peasants whom their village communes had refused to receive back after condemnation and punishment for various offences. The convict headquarters is the island of Sakhalin, in the China Sea, which very few foreigners have ever visited. It is crowded now and can take no more, and its condition is said by Russians themselves to be very bad. Indeed its prisons, which will not hold half the convicts, are admitted in the official report itself to be "dans un état de vétusté très avancée."

It is evident to anybody who studies the state of Siberia that this wonderful country can never enjoy its due development until the whole system of convict transportation is done away with. Not a week passes without a murder in every Siberian town. Two emigrants had been killed in the Siberian train shortly before my visit. The head of one force of free labourers upon railway works was in Siberia for an outrage upon a child; the boss of another was a murderer. The porter at my hotel in Irkutsk was a murderer from the Caucasus. Theoretically, when bad characters are deported they are forbidden to leave the district to which they are assigned; practically, they leave as soon as it suits them, and their first object is to kill some peasant for his

clothes and passport. Indeed, if they did not move away they would starve, for in many cases the authorities simply turn them out and leave them to their fate.* The political exiles have made Siberia what it is, for they have been among the most educated and energetic classes in Russia; but the criminal exiles are a fatal bar to further progress. Siberia will therefore eagerly welcome the good news that the commission appointed by the Tsar to consider the whole question of criminal transportation has just reported against the Siberian system, and recommended the construction of great convict prisons in Russia. The cost of these to the State will be enormously greater than that of criminal Siberia, and assuredly the lot of the convict will henceforth be harder, but the decision was inevitable if one of the richest parts of the Tsar's dominions is to attain its proper prosperity.

* "De fait, la situation du forçat était, sous maints rapports, mieux assurée que celle des condamnés à la déportation simple ou à la relégation. Tandis que le premier, en étant astreint au travail, avait souvent son propre ménage, certains déportés, abandonnés à la merci du sort, dans un pays presque inhabité, avaient de la peine à trouver de l'occupation pour assurer leur existence. On conçoit par conséquent l'importance de la récente loi qui a supprimé la déportation, et avec elle ce genre spécial de prolétariat vagabond. La prison contemporaine n'est certainement pas l'idéal du régime pénitentiaire; mais son effet sera toujours infiniment moins nuisible que celui du vagabondage pour ainsi dire forcé qui vient de supprimer la loi susmentionnée."—Report of the Central Prison Administration, reproduced in the *Gazette de St. Pétersbourg*, March 18, 1901.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THE GREAT WATER-WAY

CHAPTER XI

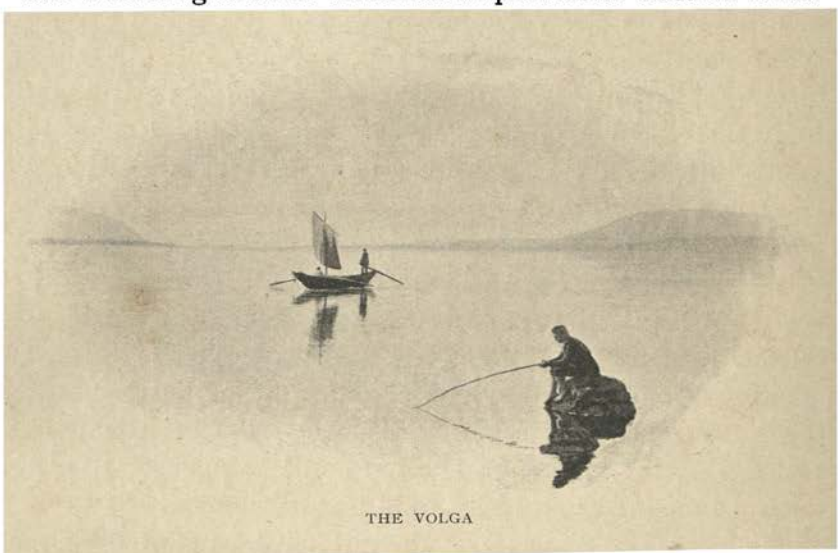
"LITTLE MOTHER VOLGA"

RUSSIA has two great Asiatic railways, each destined to play a vast part in her commercial and political future. One of them runs, speaking roughly, from St. Petersburg to China, the other from the Black Sea (by the Caucasus and the Caspian) to India. The commercial objects of the two are different, but a political aim they have in common : together with other lines shortly to be built they form part of the net which Russia is throwing over Asia. Having seen the Great Siberian Railway, as described in previous chapters, my next object was the Trans-Caspian Railway, and the heart of Asia to which it goes. But Russia is a country of magnificent distances, and practically the whole of it separated me, in the north of Europe, from Asia Minor, in the south, with a great mountain chain, crossed by no railway, intervening. To make the whole journey by rail would have been long, dreary and roundabout, whereas if I could get down the Volga, it would be not only a comfortable but a very interesting one. But snow had begun to fall in Siberia, and the freezing of the Volga was close at hand. Fortune, however, was kind, for on the platform at Samara I learned that the last boat of the season was to leave the same night. The traveller from Western Europe reaches the Caucasus most pleasantly by steamed from Constantinople to Batum, or if he is already in Russia, by steamer from Odessa. It is only when you are coming from Siberia that your best route is down the Volga to Tsaritsin, and thence by rail to Vladikavkaz.

Samara had both plague and famine for its neighbours of late, but there were no signs of either. It is a typical Russian provincial town, defying description. Its houses range from wooden hovels to well-built, handsome structures, public offices and business premises. Its principal sight is, of course, a statue of a Tsar. Its best streets are paved and the others are a welter of mud. Its chief industry and the source of its prosperity—though this has suffered from the succession of bad harvests in the Volga provinces, and has still, I fear, to suffer more—could be learned from a glance round the store of Messrs. Koenitzer & Co., where every kind of agricultural tool and machine was displayed. Incidentally I have to thank this most courteous German firm for very timely assistance, and a word about this may be of use to future travellers in provincial Russia.

My letters had been addressed to the Samara branch of the Volga-Kama Bank, and I had a personal letter of introduction to them from a Moscow banker, besides my official letter of recommendation from the Minister of Finance himself. Under these circumstances, when I approached the manager of the bank with London and Westminster circular notes, I imagined that cash would be forthcoming. It was a vain hope. The manager of the principal bank of this important town of 100,000 people, situated at the focus of traffic where the greatest railway in Russia crosses the greatest river, looked at my financial documents with amiable curiosity, as if they had been a Papal Bull or a portrait of the Emperor of China. As for advancing money upon such things, the very idea raised obvious and painful suspicions in his mind. After long discussion I inquired if he could suggest any means whereby the solvency of the London and Westminster Bank could be made manifest in Samara. He thought that if he telegraphed to Moscow, and Moscow telegraphed to St. Petersburg, and St. Petersburg telegraphed to London, the deed

might ultimately be done. How long would this take? Perhaps a week. I left, with the intention of seeking the nearest pawnshop, when the firm of Koenitzer & Co. arose like a star in my financial night, and, having the usual knowledge of the methods of credit and exchange common to civilised countries, was kind enough to give me in two minutes all the money I wanted. Let this be the record of my thanks, and a warning to other travellers in provincial Russian towns

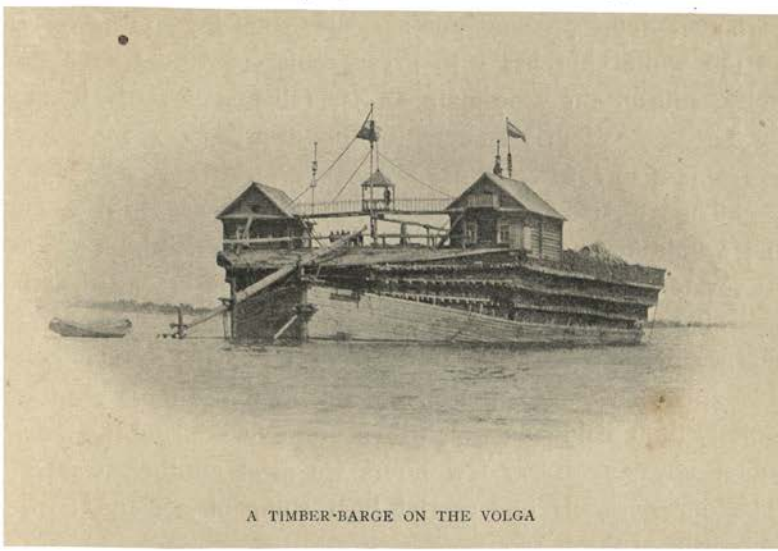


THE VOLGA

where the constellation of Koenitzer may not be in the ascendant, to carry their cash in a belt, as one does in Korea, for instance.

At the foot of a steep hill, at the end of a broad street, the great grey Volga flows past Samara. A paddle-steamer, looking like a row of two-storey houses, lay at a wharf piled high with goods—sacks of corn and flour, thousands of wooden cases, cart-wheels, the kind of dug-out canoes in which linen is washed in Russia, in fact, a miscellaneous mountain of merchandise, all asking urgently to be taken south before the frost blocked the long waterway. And a shout-

ing, pushing, perspiring mass of peasant humanity, with its belongings, personal and professional, in innumerable great bundles. We were off before the hour struck, and an excellent meal and a large and verminous cabin awaited me upon the bosom of what geographers know as the biggest river in



A TIMBER-BARGE ON THE VOLGA

Europe, and what Russians affectionately call "little Mother Volga."

This gigantic waterway, 2300 miles long, over eleven miles wide in the spring at Nijni Novgorod, draining a country three times the size of France, with a delta of seventy-two miles, is a disappointment as regards scenery. The Rhine, the Hudson, the Yang-tsze, and the Thames all surpass it in their different aspects. Its left bank is an unbroken fertile plain, edged with willows and dwarf oaks, and when the sandbanks, bordered with a green strip, come down to the river, one could think one's self on the Nile. The right bank is an uninterrupted cliff, worn steep by the river in geologic time. Every now and then, when its angle is acuter,

a little village clings to it, the mud-coloured houses rising one above another on the mud-coloured slope. The important town of Saratof extends for a mile or more, and very quaint is the view of it from the steamer. Its centre is a mass of red-brick buildings, and on each flank is a long suburb of wooden houses, tailing out at last to a fringe of poverty. High white churches with green roofs are dotted over the city, and all the wide main streets fall precipitously to the water's edge at a right angle, looking at a distance more like streams than roads.

The river is covered with busy life. Tugs are slowly hauling whole fleets of barges upstream, some loaded high above the water, some flat-decked and black—these are filled with petroleum from Baku. Most picturesque are the immense barges of timber drifting down from the north; these are as big and as high as a house, and on the top of them are the solidly built cabins in which their crews live during the long quiet voyage. Every few hours we meet another steamer like ourselves, its one scarlet boat slung at a slant, nose upwards, at the stern.

Near Saratof we made fast to a huge oil barge, and I think this was the most interesting incident of the Volga. No fuel but oil is used upon the river or near it, and the consumption is increasing so fast that, although the supply is increasing also, the price is steadily rising. It is not, of course, petroleum or kerosene as we know it, but the heavy residue left after these light oils are refined. The residue, for its fuel value, is worth more than the illuminating oils, and indeed I was told that the whole industry exists practically to produce this residue. As soon as we were made fast, a long wooden sluice was run aboard, one end of which was under the canvas pipe leading from a huge tank on the deck of the barge, and the other end over the opening of our own oil cisterns amidships. The word was given, and instantly a thick, dark green, almost

inodorous stream rushed down the sluice. In less than an hour we had taken on board some forty tons, enough for four days and nights of consecutive steaming.

When we cast off again I went down to the stokehole to see what became of the oil. There were four large cylindrical boilers, each with apparently an ordinary firebox but without any grate-bars. In each furnace door was an opening a few inches wide, and two pipes, about an inch and a half in diameter, descended from the roof and coalescing in a joint with two taps, like that which unites the oxygen and hydrogen cylinders of a magic lantern, projected a little way into the firebox. The principle is precisely that of the familiar ozoniser or scent-spray, the oil coming into contact with a jet of steam and being driven into the furnace in the shape of a blast of petroleum vapour, which burns fiercely with a deafening roar. The heat is intense, the inside of the furnace being red-hot all round, but it is astonishing to see a perfectly empty firebox, with all the boiler-tubes in full sight, and not a cinder nor a trace of smoke. The stokehole is as clean as any other part of the vessel, and the two stokers stand quietly, each before a pair of boilers, holding a little wooden mallet in his hand. This is to tap the steam and oil cocks, as they are too hot to touch. A few taps, and one of the boiler fires is extinguished. A few more taps and a torch thrust for a second through the opening and it is alight again. Half a dozen taps and one furnace is burning with a blaze and a heat and a roar positively alarming. The contrast between this simplicity and cleanliness and the banging, the dirt, the sweat and the cinder-shifting of an ordinary stokehole is extraordinary. When I went on deck there was not even a suggestion of smoke from the one broad low funnel, and the captain told me that he could get up steam from cold water in a little over half an hour.

The combination of perfect river transport, connected by canals with St. Petersburg and Moscow, and the abundance of

such a convenient and cheap fuel, is obviously destined to promote manufactures of all kinds in the Volga towns. At Saratof it was easy to see that a number of the factories were new, while at Tsaritsin a French company is setting up ironworks on a great scale. It is safe to prophesy that many other similar enterprises will take shape hereabouts in years to come.*

At Tsaritsin I left the steamer after three days on board, and next day took train for Vladikavkaz, another three days travel. It is a long and monotonous railway journey across a plain with no elevation on it bigger than your hat, green in spring and coming gradually under cultivation—though you never cease to wonder how the little scattered villages can hold inhabitants enough to till it—and brown as a nut after the summer heats. After a time you cease even to look out of the carriage-window, and doze or read through the long hours, while the train itself seems to go to sleep, so slowly does it move.

Distances look insignificant upon the small scale map of Russia, but, in fact, they are very great, and nearly a week had elapsed since I left the railway in the north, on my return from Siberia, before I came in sight of the great range. But at last I looked up and saw suddenly a startling prospect—nothing less than an army of dazzling snow-white mountains, marching, as it were, in close order over the mud-coloured plain. A few hours later we were in Vladikavkaz, whose name means the Mastery of the Caucasus,

* This year the navigation of the Volga has been attended with very great difficulty, arising partly from the failure of the light-buoys, resulting in many barges running aground and blocking the channel, and more from an extraordinary lowness of water. It is said that no less than 15,000,000 pouds of petroleum and petroleum residue are stranded in barges between Astrakhan and Saratof, while 40,000,000 pouds are lying at Astrakhan, and will probably have to be stored there during the winter. The lack of this enormous quantity of material for light and fuel will evidently cause the most serious embarrassment. The dredging of a deep navigable channel in the Volga is a matter which demands the immediate efforts of the Government on a much larger scale than that at present pursued. Probably the authorities would welcome foreign coöperation in this great undertaking.

just as Vladivostok means the Mastery of the East, though, like Gordon's "ever-victorious army," such appellations convey an aspiration rather than a description. Here the plain and the monotony and the West come to an end, and the mountains and the wonderland and the East begin.

Like all such Russian towns, it has a cosmopolitan centre of a more or less pretentious kind—the hotel, and an institution or two, any of which buildings might be found enclosing the smug *bourgeoisie* of the French provinces, or persuading Ferdinand of Bulgaria that he was still in his Austrian home. After this kernel, the streets gain in dirt, in colour, in that frank indecency of procedure which marks Oriental life, and the first houses you pass as you enter the town, and the last as you leave it, are square, crumbling wooden caves with all the messy food-products or the garish cottons hanging in them that characterise the customs of Eastern peoples.

It is a cold and bright October day, and the great blue mountains that appear at every southern street-end of Vladikavkaz are powdered with snow. I have not seen mountains trust themselves so near a plain before. They seem a company of noble travellers, these huge peaks, always at the same point of arrival, walking into the town and toward the plain. The snow upon them is not more than the generous sugaring upon a birthday-cake, and their deep fissures keep an indigo gloom. They disdain foot-hills and approaches and slopes and shoulders, and only a green grass ridge seeded thickly with sheep, and a wooded hill or two, russet and orange at this autumn moment, lie between them and the steppe. My road leads over them, 8000 feet high, by the most famous mountain-highway of the world.

CHAPTER XII

THE FROSTY CAUCASUS

FROM the Oxus to the Arctic Circle, and from Kars to Kamchatka, the Tsar rules many strange peoples and countries, but the Caucasus is strangest of all. Indeed, any one who averred that the Caucasus is the most interesting land of the world would be able to back his opinion with good reasons. The range is a wall across the narrow isthmus which joins Europe and Asia, and the Gorge of Dariel is the door in this wall through which have come almost all the migrating peoples between East and West since men began to move at all. From many of these migrations stragglers remained, some in one valley, some in another, and their new homes lent themselves so well to defence against all after-comers that the original settlers were able to increase and multiply and keep their race intact. Hence the Caucasus contains to-day the direct and not greatly changed descendants of peoples otherwise lost in the mists of remote antiquity. It is, in the words of Mr. Douglas Freshfield, the first explorer and climber of the mountains, "an ethnological museum where the invaders of Europe, as they travelled westward to be manufactured into nations, left behind samples of themselves in their raw condition." The Germans, destroyers of sacred and profane legend, do not accept this theory, and Professor Virchow declares that it is disproved by the fact that the Caucasus could not have been a highway when the ice-fields came down lower than they do now, and that the languages of the Caucasus are not related to languages elsewhere, as would have been the case if the speakers of them were remnants of

greater nations that had passed on. But the theory of human samples is so attractive, and the races of the Caucasus are so original and peculiar, that for my part I share on this occasion the willingness of the American humorist to "know some things that are not so." At least the sceptical Germans may leave us the classic belief that Kasbek was the scene of the martyrdom of Prometheus, and the Christian legend that Abraham's tent and Christ's cradle are still to be found hidden on its slopes. The Caucasus, in fact, was destined by nature to be the home of myth, for in ancient times it was the barrier beyond which no man could go, and therefore the gate of the land which man populated with the offspring of his dreams—the land "of Gog and Magog, of gold-guarding Griffins, one-eyed Arimaspians, and Amazons—of all the fabulous creatures which pass slowly out of the atlases of the learned into the picture-books of the nursery."

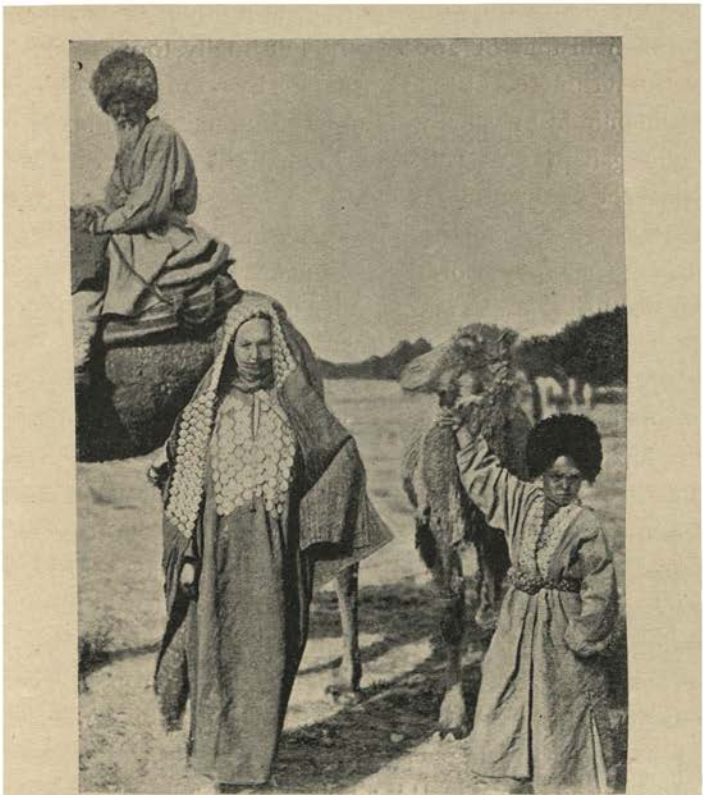
CAUCASIAN TYPES—TATARS

History is so romantic, however, in the Caucasus, that myth can be dispensed with. It tells us how Alexander the Great conquered Georgia; how the legions of Pompey, and, long afterward, those of Justinian, fought at the mouth of the Dariel Pass, but that neither soldier nor merchant ever passed up from the south, while the Scythian barbarians to the north were equally

unable to push their way down. The history of the people who held the Pass begins in the third century B.C., with King Pharnavaz, and goes on, in an unbroken and often bloody story, down 1300 years till the swords of the Crusaders had so weakened the infidel hordes that King David II. (1089), whose descent from the Psalmist is commemorated by the harp and the sling in the arms of Georgia, drove out the Turks and laid the foundations of order and civilisation upon which, a hundred years later, Queen Tamara of immortal memory built up the Augustan age of her country. If half that is told of this lady be true, she was one of the most remarkable women that ever filled a throne or broke a heart. So beautiful that Shahs and Sultans competed for her hand; so gifted with poesy that she celebrated her glorious victories in ever-memorable verse; so humble that she earned her own living every day; so pious that she set aside for the Virgin a portion of all her spoils of war; so brave that she defied a Persian threat, backed by 800,000 warriors, she spread the fame and the fear of Georgia through all the accessible world. But the flowers had not bloomed often on her grave ere that invincible scourge of Asia, Genghiz Khan, came to Georgia, and her son went down before his victory-glutted Mongols, while her daughter's beauty, like her own before, brought rejected suitors seeking revenge at the head of their armies. Georgia became the cockpit where the rival Mohammedan sects of Persia and Turkey fought out their everlasting quarrel; it was divided by its own rulers, and for many a generation its story is of pillage and poison and murder and the putting out of eyes. Then came Irakli the Great, the contemporary of Frederick the Great, who said of him, "*Moi en Europe, et en Asie l'invincible Hercule, roi de Georgie.*"* Finally, when Georgia was helpless at the feet of Persia, came Russia, nominally mistress of Georgia in 1801. She had to defeat both Persia and Turkey before her conquest

* Wardrop.

was consolidated, and to suppress many a rising of her new subjects. The latest of these was the revolution led by the prophet-patriot Shamyl, who raised the entire Caucasus against her and held her whole might at bay for sixteen years, destroying



CAUCASIAN TYPES—A TEKKIN FAMILY

several Russian armies, until he was hopelessly surrounded in the highland fastness of Gunib in 1859 and surrendered. In the public gallery at Tiflis there is a huge painting representing Shamyl with head thrown back and scarlet beard, brought before the Russian commander, seated under a tree amid his staff. As I looked at it a Georgian peasant, who, of course, could not read the inscription below, timidly

approached me and asked, "If you please, is that Shamyl?" "It is," I replied, and his deep, long-drawn "Ah" showed how poignant the memory of this lost leader is yet. And when I left the gallery half an hour later he was still gazing upon the man with whose fall all the hopes of his people, with their history of 2000 years, fell finally too.

But the interest of the Caucasus is by no means confined to its romantic history, nor even to its ethnological variety also—its once gallant Georgians, who so long championed the Cross against the Crescent, its wild Lesghian highlanders of Daghestan, its savage Suanetians, but lately tamed, its Ossets, the arm-makers, "gentlemen of the mountains," its Abkhasians, who migrated to Turkey *en masse* rather than remain under Russian rule, its vain and handsome Circassians, its lazy Mingrelians of the fever-haunted coast, and all the other races whose names suggest a philologist's nightmare—Imerian, Rachan, Gurian, Lechgum, Laz, Pshav, Khevsur, Ubych, Shapsuch, Dshiget, Ingush, Galgai, Kist, Tush, Karabulak, Kazi-Kumyksh! Its mountain scenery is unparalleled for grandeur except by the Himalayas, and offers many a virgin peak to the adventurous Alpinist. The sportsman may find ibex and stag and boar and wild bull, and game-birds to satiety, for, in contrast with other places, game is becoming more abundant because of the high price of licences—so abundant, indeed, that, according to the Tiflis *Listok*, bears and wolves rob the shepherd before his eyes, and wild boars come to the fields in droves. It is a botanist's paradise: between the arid plain and the snows is a belt where men on horseback can play at hide-and-seek amid the flowers, "survivals of the giant flora of past ages." It contains the other great oil-fields of the world, and its mineral wealth, already great, only awaits development to astonish an age little apt to enthusiasm over the treasures it drags from their hiding-places in the earth. Finally, to the student of politics its very atmosphere reeks with interest, since some day the vast armies of Russia will pour through it

again to another death-grip with the Turk – the great fortress of Kars is fortified only on the south side—and who knows what scenes it may witness if Britain and Russia draw the sword, and the masses of Moscovy march singing across it, to the Caspian, to find their graves on the banks of the Indus?

Yet this little land, in spite of its surpassing interest from every point of view, remains comparatively unknown. It can be reached almost in luxury, and on its main routes the most delicate dame need suffer no undue discomfort. In the whole of Russia there is not an hotel so clean and pleasant as the Hôtel de Londres at Tiflis. I cannot think why the enterprising and well-to-do tourist, who has exhausted Europe, does not turn his steps thither. Perhaps these pages may induce him to do so. And as Mr. Freshfield, who justly claims that he and his companions "took the first step toward converting the prison of Prometheus into a new playground for his descendants," says that he cannot enforce his recommendation better than by echoing the exhortation of Mr. Clinton Dent, so, assuredly, neither can I. "If you worship the mountains for their own sake; if you like to

CAUCASIAN TYPES—THE REAL CIRCASSIAN

stand face to face with nature, where she mingles the fantastic and the sublime with the sylvan and the idyllic—snows, crags and mists, flowers and forests—in perfect harmony; where she enhances the effect of her pictures by the most startling contrasts, and enlivens their foregrounds with some of the most varied and picturesque specimens of the human race—go to the Caucasus. If you wish to change, not only your earth and sky but your century, to find yourself one week among the pastoral folk who once peopled Northern Asia, the next among barbarians who have been left stranded while the rest of the world has flowed on ; if it attracts you to share the bivouac of Tauli shepherds, to sit at supper with a feudal chieftain while his retainers chant the old ballads of their race by the light of birch-bark torches—go to the Caucasus." I would only add, go to the Caucasus also if you would visit a city where seventy languages are spoken, and where you can step aside from the opera-house and the electric tramway and in five minutes be drinking wine from an ox-skin and talking politics and revolution and war with mysterious men of the real old hopeful, all-knowing, all-plotting East, the while you bargain for a turquoise from Tehran, or a Turkoman carpet, or a pinch of that perfume of strange potency which is one of the very few things that the East does not willingly give for Western gold.

But the traveller in the Caucasus would be unwise to let his attention be monopolised by its romance and picturesqueness, to the exclusion of its practical and commercial interests. These, however, are hardly inferior to its more dazzling side, and they are growing, and destined to grow, in amazing fashion. Nature has endowed the country with a climate in which anything will flourish, and the soil holds mineral wealth in vast variety and infinite quantity. At present Russian official methods seriously handicap production, but M. de Witte's influence is gradually

removing obstructions and hastening procedure. If he lives, and no war comes to strain Russian resources, the next ten years will see all the world astonished at the commercial development of the Caucasus. The progress of the oil industry of Baku everybody knows, and I give the astonishing figures in a subsequent chapter. The export of manganese ore, an essential of the steel industry, the Caucasus furnishing exactly half of the world's

BATUM

supply, was 426,179 tons in 1900, from the two ports of Poti and Batum. As regards other productions, the British Consul at Batum, Mr. Patrick Stevens, who speaks from intimate knowledge, says that if the uncertainty that hangs over Russian official methods were removed "there can be no shadow of doubt that the boundless resources of this country, so richly endowed by nature, might be developed very advantageously both for the capitalist and the population," for "its mineral wealth is practically unlimited, copper, zinc, iron, tin, and

many other metals being found throughout the region, in most cases in exceedingly extensive deposits." Round the shores of the Black Sea are several Imperial Estates, known as "appanages," where excellent wine is produced in large quantities, and this is an industry which might be greatly extended by experienced and skilful wine-growers with capital. The wine of Khaketia is already drunk all over Russia. Around Batum are flourishing tea-plantations, and the two crops already gathered are said to have been very satisfactory. Hitherto Chinese tea has alone been grown, but on an estate of the Imperial family Indian tea has been successfully planted, and further plantations of this are now to be made near Sukhum and in Mingrelia. A British company has just been formed to develop new oil-fields. And one more eloquent fact in conclusion: the railway across the Caucasus, from Batum on the Black Sea to Baku on the Caspian, six hundred and twenty-one miles in thirty hours, showed a net profit of revenue over expenditure last year of nearly £1,000,000—$5,000,000; and yet the rolling-stock is so inadequate to the traffic offered that a large amount of freight is now going by rail round the mountain range, *viâ* Petrofsk and Vladikavkaz, to the port of Novorossisk, instead of to Batum. At present agriculture alone is languishing in the Caucasus, but this industry has its ups and downs everywhere, and when it is less prosperous there is the more labour available for commercial enterprise.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GEORGIAN ROAD

THE traffic over the great Georgian Military Road, which connects Europe and Asia across the Caucasus, is in the hands of contractors who work under strict official rules and tariff.* You visit the office at Vladikavkaz, inspect a series of photographs of all the available types of vehicle, make your choice, pay the charge and receive a ticket which you show *en route*. I selected a carriage in shape something between a small victoria and a small barouche. It had a long and heavy pole for its size and was built for two horses, but for the Pass we have an extra horse hung on at each side by rope traces. All four are grey, with the pretty Russian harness of thin straps dotted with brass buttons. It does not look strong enough to hold a refractory horse for a minute, and even the four single reins the driver holds in his hands, though thick and double, are so twisted and hardened by weather that they might be expected to snap, like all unnourished leather, in a moment of emergency.

Snugly packed in, well folded in furs and rugs, and our lighter belongings tucked about us and tied on wherever there is space for them, we rock away through the rugged streets of Vladikavkaz, and soon we have passed its most eastern limit and are in the country. All mountain ranges have the same beginnings in the plains—a gentle ascent, rolling foot-hills, a zig-

* The charge is four kopecks (a penny—2 cents) per horse per verst, and the distance is 201 versts (132 miles). The total cost for a two-seated private carriage works out at about £6—say $30—for the trip. Prince Hilkoff, Minister of Railways, has just made the journey in a motor-car, and it is proposed to use these for carrying the mails across the Pass.

zag road, white peaks on the horizon drawing ever nearer, a dashing, splashing river-keeping company, a rocky descent beside the narrow road, and then of a sudden a chill in the air which may be intoxicating to the mountaineer, but causes the plainsman to draw his wraps tighter about him. Our horses travel splendidly, and we do not yet seem to be mounting sensibly; now and then a cream-coloured sheep-dog, in shape a small St. Bernard, with black muzzle and cropped black ears, flings himself at the outer horses with a deep and savage bark, but these, as we are to learn presently, have brought their troops and troops of sheep out of the high mountains for the winter, and some of them are still too tired to get up out of the roadway.

For Fortune gave us a wonderful experience in thus crossing the Caucasus. By chance we had hit upon the very day chosen by the shepherds to bring down their flocks from the summer mountain pastures to their winter quarters in the plains—it may have been a Saint's Day, sacred by tradition to this change, or perhaps the first snows of winter gave the signal. From Vladikavkaz to the top of the pass, however, we met these flocks in such numbers as I had never dreamed of. Shall I be believed when I say that during that day we met a hundred thousand sheep and goats? I fancy it was much more, and during our first day we thought of little else.

The whole long simple business of sheep-rearing, more archaic to-day in its pursuit than the breeding and keeping of any other animal, is deeply interesting from many a point of view. I am delighted to add another sheep silhouette, so to speak, to memories I have gathered of "the meek-nosed, the passionless faces" of sheep in other parts of the world. The Caucasian sheep—like every other inhabitant, brute or human, of these mountains—abounds in character. Unlike other Eastern sheep, it is mainly a white beast, with fawn-coloured

ears and fawn-coloured feet, and a light dash of freckles upon its white nose; but beyond this pretty colouring only the buttocks are remarkable, and these because they carry what look like superfluous cushions of wool, similar in shape, if I am permitted the illustration, to the "bustles" of twenty years ago, but which prove to be lumps of fat between which

VLADIKAVKAZ, AT THE FOOT OF THE CAUCASUS

depend their short and modest tails. The rams, of which there are numbers, have horns that curve in double curls, and though they are relatively small like the sheep they are beautiful and walk with pride among the flock, stamping their feet and barking from time to time.

Deplorably mingled with the sheep are goats—goats of all sorts and styles, black, brown, white, and mottled; goats with great horns sweeping upward and over their backs, or widespread to each side, or even malignly twisted one over another. Nothing will ever make a goat look a good animal. Even a kid,

in his moment of prettiest play, is impish as a lamb cannot be. Nobody knows why this is. From the first a goat has been used as an emblem of sin—though nobody who knows goats can understand why they should be tolerated upon the left hand, where, after all, you can smell them just as much as if they were upon the right. And a goat is not morally sensitive; it will not realise any indignity in being allowed only upon the left hand, while a sheep is too stupid to appreciate any compliment in being placed upon the right. However, this is no moment for theological discussion. I was about to say that in the classics, in the Scriptures and by the old masters, a goat has always symbolised evil, depravity, and general vileness. The moment you see goats, you understand this. Their cross-set agate eyes of salacious regard; their flat, ironical noses always a-snuffle, their thin, wicked mouths at the end of long lascivious faces—the thing is stamped upon them: goats are irremedially and immemorially bad, and it is only the deep invulnerable stupidity of sheep which has prevented them from knowing it and being corrupted by it, and has preserved to the world immaculate, snow-pure, the persistent, inalienable innocence of lambs.

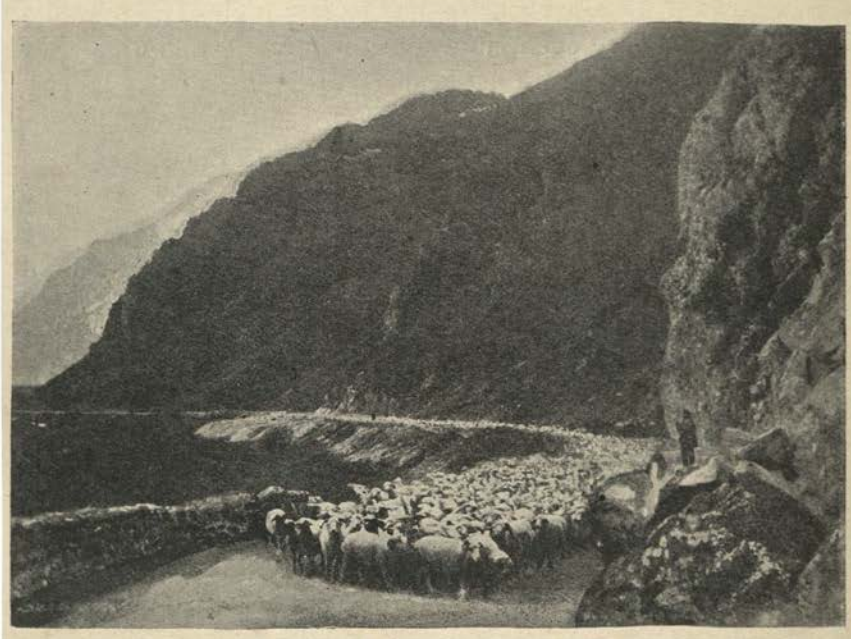
It was beautiful to watch these flocks, quitting the fastnesses that have harboured them all summer, and now, ere the sparse vegetation of the high pastures is bedded with its first coverlet of snow, hurrying down to the open plain and the shelter of the reaped maize-fields. Jammed tight together, pouring along like a flood, running like a frothy river for a quarter of an hour at a time between the horses' legs and the wheels of the carriage, the whole road was blocked with them. Their backs were a woolly sea, the patter of their innumerable feet was like the tide upon a stony beach. One grew giddy as they surged by. What a reckoning there will be, when they reach the pastures by the river below, to see how many more the herds number when they come back in the autumn than

THE GEORGIAN ROAD—THE APPROACH

when they went up in the spring! The bronzed shepherds in huge brown felt cloak, black fur hat the size of any tea-cosy on their swart heads, *bashlik* draped at hazard in lines of inextinguishable grace upon their powerful shoulders, and ten-foot staff in hand, walk at their head, amidst them, and at the end behind the least and the weakest of the lambs. When they see our carriage, the sheep halt—halt as sheep always do, neatly, feet together very even, almost in the "first position" of the dancing-class. Then the shepherd cries, in harsh and sharp falsetto—is it the cry of the hawk to call their woolly wits together, to assemble such odds of cunning as may have been given them for the eluding of their enemy the falcon or the eagle?—and the flock hurries forward at this cry, their little feet poaching the dirtied snow and making that delicate sound which belongs solely to the passing of many sheep and has something timid and feminine and diffident about it. Sometimes one startled, foolish face pokes between the legs of our horses, and at once a blind, unreasoning dozen of foot-followers dare the passage, so that the horse starts and screams in fright and is shouted at by the driver.

When the stream is flowing evenly past the two carriages the shepherds whistle encouragingly and the cream-coloured dogs, with their sinister faces turned our way, pass with mistrustful feet. They are too wearied to make any adverse demonstration; for days they have been harrying the flock upon the mountains, collecting stragglers, constraining obstinate climbers, circumventing the astutely divagating goat, now dog-tired and sullen they are wending with the rest to the plain, their puppies—soft, furry love-pledges of a wild summer—looking over the edges of the saddle-pockets of the flock-donkey or the shepherd's horse. How innocent and frank and pretty are the puppy-faces; how charmingly they extricate first one then another soft, supple paw, and hang it out till the shepherd sees them and hurriedly crams it in again and

binds the edges of the pocket tighter round the puppy neck. I was so enchanted by these creatures, even by the open enmity of their large savage parents, that I priced a ravishingly beautiful puppoose (that would be a nice word) and learned that its price was above roubles, and not even for five would its master part with it. Perhaps had I shown him a gold-piece of



THE GEORGIAN ROAD—A WOOLLY WAVE

five I should at this moment be cluttered, as the Yorkshire people say, with a cream-coloured Caucasian puppy of Circassian beauty and a latent savagery to terrify a whole English county.

I dwell overlong upon these by-sights of the road, but indeed most of our first day went in passing that sea of sheep and goats, and the dogs and the humble flock-donkey, bridleless and bitless and burdened with all the huge hairy felt mantles of the shepherds, pattering meekly among the crowd, were always

with us. After a spell of a dozen versts or so, we drew up at a post-station. These, like the excellent military road, are maintained by the Government, and entertainment can be had at them of a modest character. In the barrack-like building, very grey and cold, we passed instinctively toward a door on which was the word "Buffet," written phonetically in Russian letters to rhyme with "muffet." A little bar, with "snacks" of sausage, herring, and Caucasian cheese in front, and bottles of vodka at the back, rewarded us.

The shadow of the mountains fell upon this posting-house, and in the sharp cold a camel and a scatter of bristly pigs made an odd group. Soon our fresh horses were harnessed, and this time, as we followed the course of a little river in a large and gravelly bed, we felt ourselves at last among the mountains. The vegetation of the valley was interesting, and I indulged an old habit of collecting berries of shrubs and trees that were new—a thing that looked like a willow and had many orange-berries clustered tightly to its stem and long spines—also a spray of barberry, thinner and pinker than ours at home, to grow in my own far-away garden. Turkey oaks, falling now to yellow, crowded and hung from the cliff upon our right, and the usual sorts of rock-ferns nestled in the damp seams of the stone.

The engineering of the road was masterly, and, like all mountain-roads that have presented great difficulties, it every now and then made light by serious risk by running close to huge overhanging lumps of mountain which, if not to-day on my head, then to-morrow on yours, will descend convincingly. Everywhere the greatest care is taken of this most important military highway—Russia's avenue into that country she coveted and fought for so long. It is easy to understand her passionate desire to possess this great range, this fine race or tangle of fine races, this fertile country on the southern slopes. If I were Russia, and as flat as Russia, with only the Urals to

point to as Russian mountains, I should have wanted the Caucasus just as badly, and I would have sacrificed the men of whole provinces of plain life to possess them, as Russia did.

Eight miles from Vladikavkaz is the posting-station of Balta; eleven miles farther is Lars; and five miles farther is the world-famous Gorge of Dariel, the "Caucasian Gates" of Pliny, the dark and awful defile between Europe and Asia. Gradually, as we drive on, the hills rise and close in on us till at length they fall almost sheer to the edge of the rushing Terek and the narrow road, leaving only just room for these at the bottom of a rocky cleft, 5000 feet deep. The air strikes chill as a vault; not a ray of sunshine enters; the driver stoops low and lashes his horses; instinctively we lapse into silence. The geologist calls this gorge a "fault," for it is not a pass over the mountain-chain, but a rent clear across it. To the imaginative traveller, however, it is a fit scene for the most wonderful highway in history. Seventy years ago it was a perilous road, for avalanches, or the sudden outbursts of pent-up glacial streams, swept it from end to end, but the Russians have spent twenty million dollars upon it and made it safe. In 1877 nearly all their troops and stores for carrying the war into Turkey and Asia came by this road, and it will be used again for the same purpose, although to a much less degree, for there is now direct railway connection from Moscow to Baku, at one end of the Trans-Caucasian Railway, and therefore to Kars itself, *viâ* Tiflis; and equally to Kars from Batum, at the other end, to which fortified port steamers would bring troops and supplies from Odessa and Novorossisk in the Black Sea. The gorges of the Yang-tsze may be as impressive—I have not seen them—but there is nothing in Europe which produces so profound an effect of dread upon the mind as this lonely, silent, gloomy, cold abysm of Dariel. You do not wonder that any people holding it could bar the way to the rest of the world—the only cause for surprise is that before the present road was constructed anybody ever

got through it at all. It even said, "Thus far and no farther," to Rome herself, and marked the limit of her dominion.

The gorge ends suddenly, as we dash at a right angle over a narrow bridge, and find a most picturesque sight before us. The valley has now a flat floor between its two rugged walls of rock, and man has turned such a narrow mountain-gap to his own uses, as was inevitable when Europe is at one end and Asia

THE GEORGIAN ROAD—RUSSIAN FORT IN THE PASS

at the other, for suddenly, where the road widens to a few flat acres, a Russian fortress springs into view—a square building, with corner towers, battlements and loopholes, precisely the fortress of the fairy-tale and the box of bricks. The guide-book, even the trusty Murray, points out that the fort of Dariel is commanded by the surrounding mountains, but adds that "an enemy could not draw any cannon up their sides." This is quite true—unless they took their cannon up in balloons. A Cossack

sentry lounges before the gate and scrutinises me suspiciously as I stop the carriage and get out my camera, but there is no other sign of life. The choice of such a spot, however, to dispute the passage of the Pass was anticipated long, long ago, for on the summit of a peak high above the modern fortress stand the ruins of a greater ancient castle, the rocky and impregnable home of the Princess Tamara—not her of history, but her of immortal legend, in which truth and fancy can never again be plucked apart. It is said that hither came all her lovers, an ever-flowing stream, since she was of resistless beauty, and that when her fancy tired of them they were hurled into the torrent below. In this castle passes the action of Lermontof's play "The Demon," but he has none of this gruesome story, though Tamara's beauty is there :

> Witness, thou star of midnight, witness, sun,
> Rising and setting, king upon his throne,
> Nor Shah of golden Persia, e'er did kiss,
> A face so bright, so beautiful as this;
> No houri in the noontide heat did lave
> A form so perfect in the fountain's wave,
> And lover's hand, since Eden's days, I trow,
> Ne'er smoothed the wrinkles from so fair a brow.*

But as one gazes up at these ruins in the spot of all the world apt to breed the romance and passion and war of days when life was thick-set with such, one earnestly longs to pierce the trivial veil of legend and poetry, and know what *really* happened there—just the daily life of the men and women who looked along Dariel from that high-built eyrie. These battlemented and loopholed towers repulse or yield to attacks which change with the changing years, but the stronghold of the heart knew then, as it knows to-day, but one plan of sap and mine, and it is rarely safe from treachery within. Princess Tamara, did your lonely castle in this gorge, so cold and dark

* Storr's Translation.

at midday, keep you safe from the insidious foe? I would give much to know your story.

The day was done when we came up to the post-house called after Mount Kasbek, and round us, in a close group, rose the splendid peaks of which he is the chief. Kasbek is to my eye more beautiful than Elbruz with its divided peaks; it is steeper, with terribly sheer slopes, gorges, and glaciers around it, itself ending in a savage spike of rocks against the sky, while Elbruz, really much higher and more difficult to climb (Elbruz is 18,470 feet and Kasbek 16,546*), has larger and milder-looking summits. This is a mistake in a mountain; the proper mountain is the blue and white kind, of which you can see at least ten thousand feet "out of the ground," so to speak, with a peak offering room for no more than the two feet of one climber at a time, and he so perilously placed that he must hold a cloud by the tail if he would stay there. This is the character of Kasbek—from below.

The post-house is again a bleak white building, with a large square yard behind it, round three sides of which are stables to accommodate the numerous horses required for relays. In the middle of this yard another huge old camel is standing, his head balanced upon his absurd neck and his mouth supercilious as are all camels in the desert, seen against this snowy back-

* Kasbek and Elbruz were first climbed in 1868 by Messrs. Douglas Freshfield, Comyns Tucker, and Adolphus W. Moore. When near the summit they sent back their guide, and his statements were at first received with absolute incredulity. But when the three Englishmen reappeared from the opposite valley, having gone up one side of the mountain and down the other, even the unwilling natives had to admit that the impossible had been accomplished. Elbruz was again climbed in 1875 by Mr. F. Crauford Grove, and in 1884 by M. de Déchy, a Hungarian Alpinist. But the curious jealousy of foreigners makes local writers still loath to admit the fact, though repeated descriptions have made the ascents familiar to all the world. In his "Guide au Caucase," published in 1891, M. J. Mourier has this amusing sentence about Kasbek: "Trois anglais: Freschwild, Mour et Tecker, membres du club alpestre de Londres, prétendent être parvenus jusqu'à sa cime le 18/30 Juin 1868."

ground there is something irresistibly incongruous about his appearance. He prowls about, ungroomed, loose, ignored, padding silently where he is not wanted, thrusting his horrid nose into what does not concern him. At first I thought this beast was merely resting between loads, but when he reappeared regularly at the end of each stage, I saw he served

THE CASTLE OF PRINCESS TAMARA IN THE GORGE OF DARIEL, GEORGIAN ROAD

some curious purpose. It is this: droves of camels come from time to time over the Pass, and unless the horses were accustomed to the sight and smell of these misshapen creatures they would take fright, perhaps where the way was narrow and the cliffs steep, and a catastrophe would result. Therefore at each station lives a camel, whose only business in life is to scare each passing horse into the contempt which familiarity breeds. Perhaps he understands this, and that is why he stalks

unheard up to a panting, sweating animal quenching its thirst, and suddenly thrusts his long hairy face at it, just as naughty children say "Boo!" to each other when they meet in the dark. It is one of those simple explanations which yet strike one as ludicrous, and at each post-house I am smitten anew by this strange exigency, and this fresh proof of Russia's boundless ethnological complications.

We are to stay over-night at Kasbek, and we make ourselves comfortable in the barrack-like chambers that are placed at our disposal. When we descend to the buffet for dinner, our enthusiasm hurls us in the direction of the national *plat* of *shashlik*—the delicious Caucasian mutton, cooked *à la broche* over a wood fire. We wait in happy impatience for its arrival, stemming our hunger with a *zakushka* of raw herring, with brown bread, and draughts of quaint Caucasian wine, which we profess determinedly, if with some effort, to find delicious.

By-and-by a profound and searching steam of rawish but not quite raw onion invades the buffet; this is onion at its very worst moment; raw onion is tolerable, cooked onion is palatable, onion that has merely suffered a heat-change is devastating in its effect upon the soul of the feeder. We become nervous, and when a Circassian person comes in bearing that onion which is apparently allied to the hoped-for *shashlik*, we wince palpably.

Some roughly chopped loin of mutton, smoked without and crude within, smothered in the aforesaid onion, manifests itself, and timidly we address ourselves to it. Fork and knife recoil simultaneously from each knobby piece, and one mouthful (which never gets any farther) contents each inquiring palate. The meat, hacked without any relation to its fibre, its grain, or its bones, is absolutely fresh, is also quite uncooked, and only hours of stewing could have made it fit to eat.

"Would you try the *plat national* again?—it might be better here," says some one, a day or two later. "Not again,"

is the reply; "let us wait till we get to England; my cook does it beautifully: *Navets de mouton à la broche*. No more Circassian *shashlik* baa-ing at me, if you please."

I made plans at Kasbek for an early ride up the mountains opposite, to see the little ancient church, 1400 feet above us, of Tsminda-Sameba, not that of itself this presents much interest, but the view of the mountain, and especially of its great

THE GEORGIAN ROAD—ROUND THE MOUNTAIN SIDE

black side where Prometheus was chained (though the legend is inaccurate after all, for Æschylus distinctly speaks of Prometheus' rock as above the sea and far from the Caucasus), was said to be beautiful, and I wished to enjoy a ride in true Caucasian spirit. A quarter to seven was the hour fixed, and I retired early, to be ready. When I arose at six, it was upon a world of snow that I looked out. Everything was white, and that broad-flaked, Christmas-card kind of snow we used to have in England, was falling. The stables and the yard were white;

the poor camel even had little drifts between his humps, and absurd tufts of it all over him ; you could not see fifty yards away, and all the mountains had retired within the veil. This put off my ride, and even alarmed us somewhat about the Pass and its condition. There was no mistake—the snow had come to stay; it was winter snow. What I saw fall as I looked out of the window would be there till next April.

We started at once, the hood of the carriage up, and little visible beyond the back of the driver in his thick pleated woollen gown, but all round in the grey air the broad flakes were in suspension, apparently falling with that slow deliberation, that incredible downy lightness, and that incalculable vagary of direction that characterise real snow. Suddenly, out of the grey mystery in front of us, a troop of Cossack soldiers came riding, a couple of hundred of them, returning from their service on the Armenian frontier to their little villages in the plain. These men are supplied with rifles and ammunition by Government ; their wiry little horses, their armoury of sabres, knives, and pistols, are their own. Shrouded in the black, shaggy, felt cloak that descends to the horse's tail, and nearly covers their big felt boots in the short stirrups, cowled each in his pointed *bashlik*, a hood with two ends wound round the neck and falling down the back,

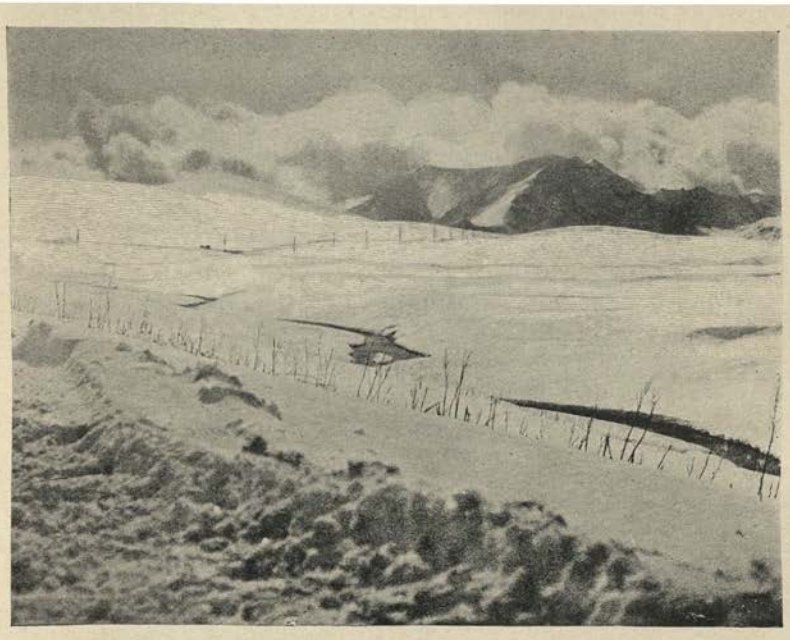
THE GEORGIAN ROAD, THE TOP OF THE PASS—OLD ROAD

they seemed like some ghostly procession of warlike friars passing in slow defile. Each cone-shaped silhouette upon his high saddle, with wild face—and what faces they were! —looking straight in front of him was the incarnation of all that is picturesque, romantic, in a word, Caucasian.

Presently the veil was lifted; the flakes grew slimmer and finer, the sun flashed out, the hood of the carriage was thrown back, and there beside us, mantled in a flawless ermine, was Kasbek and his court of peaks, bright and glittering against a heaven of Italian blue. In his winter majesty, every seam and fissure of yesterday, filled and smoothed with one night-fall of snow, he was scarce to be looked on by his subjects. And now, with many a zigzag, the road mounted in good earnest; we encountered the immobile oxen yoked to the snow-ploughs, we came upon the artificial tunnels, made to accommodate avalanches. These places where the road suddenly runs under a stoutly timbered roof built against the mountain side, bring home to one the chances of winter, and the eventualities that may—and often do—overtake the faithful post-waggon with its European mails for Tiflis. As we approach them, I can imagine the tons of snow and loosened boulders plunging down the steeps toward the river, here growing slender as a thread, and the awful thunder of them exploding over these man-made defences. Like all such work, and much of the construction work I have seen in Russia, these avalanche roofs are splendidly built; there is no trail of the contractor over them; whether the Government does its own work or contractors are different here, I know not, but assuredly the highway by which Russia's Empire is moving sedulously forward is made to endure, and to carry the great weight of her power.

At the top of the Pass is a small cross upon the hill-side, standing out in black relief upon a snowy shoulder. Many generations ago it was set to mark the summit—7977 feet, and by

the road is one of later date. This, then, is the second time during my present journey that I have crossed a mountain-range from Europe into Asia. No Alpine pass, except the Stelvio, which is 9040 feet high, is so high as this. Seldom can it be given to any one to see great mountains in more exquisite aspect than I saw these at the top of that pass. Peak



CROSSING THE SUMMIT OF THE GEORGIAN ROAD

after peak biting the sky in sharp outline; snow but a few hours old, sun and heavens dazzlingly clear and deeply blue ; the air keen and intoxicating; once more the never-failing though so often tasted intoxication of the East in front—it was one of the days of a lifetime.

Then came the wild rush from the water-parting to the valley. Two fresh horses and a hilarious driver, whom I encouraged by the promise of a rouble if he drove well, carried us at breakneck speed down a road zigzagging like the lacing of a foot-

ball. On the north the range is barren and deserted, on the south it is green, with quaint villages nestling in fertile valleys and little haystacks by the thousand telling of a fragrant summer past. At full gallop down the slopes, with a sickening swing round each corner, both inside wheels off the ground, we came, the driver, shouting in glee and swishing his savage little whip, looking back with a smile for approval as we just escaped going wholesale and headlong over the cliff at each turn. Having promised him one rouble to go fast I would gladly have given him several to go slow, but his own enjoyment was far too keen to heed our breathless protests.

The vegetation on this southern side began with a suddenness almost unbelievable; first that obstinate and crouching little fir-tree, ascetic as a fakir, and nourished upon escarpments of pure rock and dark dreams not given to trees in whose branches birds nest and sing; then pines and oak-scrub; among these presently little sun-soaked hay-fields whose harvest, in pointed cocks, stood out oddly upon the snow. Then villages or colonies or farmlets of dwellings, half underground, and with the square, open cave-like front which marks all Eastern dwellings; flat-roofed, of course, and choked and huddled round with straw-stacks and mounds of winter fodder. I was much tempted to stop and explore one of these little places where the foot-sole of its occupants never knows what it is to stand upon the flat ground, save when indoors on the trodden earth of the humble living-room.

With a swoop almost hawklike in its sheerness and its suddenness, we drop into the considerable settlement of Ananur, beside a river which is carrying the grey glacier water to the south. Here we are to harbour for the night, and only two general chambers, one for men and one for women, are at the disposal of travellers, for it is one of the smaller stations. The food is in that particular transition stage between archaism half-disdained and civilisation half-comprehended,

which is the most trying of any; but again the wine of the country and its bread give sustenance to travellers who have never been in slavery to *tables d'hôte*.

In the morning a Caucasian gentleman with white hair and a self-possession princes might envy, came and poured water upon our hands and face from a jug, while we juggled with sponge and soap in a vain effort after even precarious cleanliness. In this

HOW THE GEORGIAN ROAD COMES DOWN AT MLETI

matter we agreed that they do things handsomely in Ananur. None of us had ever been washed by a Circassian prince in full uniform before. (I think I am right in describing him as a prince; you are a prince in the Caucasus if you possess four sheep, so Russians say, jokingly, and I cannot believe that our friend had a fleece less.) We wandered up to the strange little castle; it dates from the fifteenth century, and the shells of its square and tapering towers frame and crumble round a church of later date.

Nothing about this church, save some half-obliterated frescos and the arabesques lettered beside its door, interested us, but in the river, a special breed of bull-trout mocks the prowess of the passing fisherman, and there were smooth places beside the tails of water and sudden-coming "races" in the hollows of banks where I should have delighted to see the dry-flies of a certain Liberal statesman friend alluringly floating.

That day we made the second ascent of a smaller pass, this time always among cultivated slopes where the wheat was already sprouting, the big, blue-grey buffaloes ploughing, and the little flat-roofed houses, all scraped out of the hillsides, comfortably fronting the southern sun. Visiting some of them, we found the cave-dwellers to be a handsome race indeed; the men tall, strong, and martial, bearded and bronzed and covered with weapons; the women gay in bright colours of blue and red and crimson, holding up babies whose small heads were covered with henna-tinted hair. Cocks, hens, cats, dogs, and a few little fluffy buffalo-calves all clustered in the shelter of these house-fronts, and on the roof huge oval baskets of maize-cobs shone golden, very often with the owner seated smoking beside his store of winter provender.

At Dushet we spent some time trying to get into the castle of Prince Tschliaief, which stood upon the hill, white, castellated, looking proudly across the valley at the little town with its grim, plain red boxes of new Russian barracks. In point of appearance, the Prince's palace, which was also employed as a Police Station, was easily first in its expression of martial capability. Dushet is charmingly situated, and as it is within easy reach of the cosmopolitan pleasures of Tiflis, it is the place I should recommend for a prolonged spring or autumn stay on the Georgian Road.

Ancient history pervades the Caucasus, and the last town on the road is a strange link between past and present. This is Mtskhet, the ancient capital of Georgia. The race to which

THE GEORGIAN ROAD—THE OLD ROYAL CASTLE OF MTSKHET

it belongs—or rather belonged—believes it to be the oldest town in the world, founded by Noah's great-great-great grandson, while even sober historians recognise it at the beginning of the fourth century. Here lived and reigned all the Tsars of Georgia ; hither came the Vandals of Tamerlane and rased the cathedral, but Tsar Alexander I. of Georgia rebuilt it, and under its aisles lie Georgia's rulers and wise men. The cathedral

SHOEING AN OX IN THE CAUCASUS

itself was built originally in 328 A.D., over the spot where Christ's seamless robe, brought from Golgotha either by a Jew or by the Centurion Longinus—the legends differ—and given by him to his sister Sidonia, was found. She wrapped it around her, fell dead, and as it could not be detached from her body, she was buried in it, and until it was carried off to the Cathedral of the Assumption at Moscow, a holy oil exuded from the very stones above the precious relic. Such was old Mtskhet. To-day it is a railway station on the line from Batum to Baku, the point where the military road meets the military railway—a plain village, but ennobled by the ruins of palaces and churches telling of the wonders of the days when Tsars lived here, before the proud name went north.

CHAPTER XIV

TIFLIS OF THE CROSS-ROADS

THE BOURKA

THE German philologist, Professor Brugsch, has calculated that seventy languages are spoken in Tiflis. That simple statement, pondered long enough, might almost suffice to describe the city. It is the modern Babel, the meeting place of Europe and Asia, the cross-roads of the great routes north and south, and east and west, the focus of a score of keenly trading peoples, the conglomerate deposit of two thousand years of busy history. Over this complication Russia rules easily and well. It is an excellent example of how she carries civilisation to Eastern peoples.

Externally, half of Tiflis is a little Paris, or a prettier Bucharest. A mass of tin roofs, painted in pale green and Indian red, makes a pleasant colour impression as you approach the city from the mountains, but to see it in its real and remarkable picturesqueness, as shown in my illustration, it must be viewed from the remains of the old fortress, or the Botanical Garden beside it, at the other end of the town. It lies at the bottom of a brown, treeless valley, between steep hills, on either side of the river Kura. This may not sound very attractive, but there is an abruptness about the contours

and a serpentine twist about the river that make it one of the most strikingly placed towns I know. In summer, as might be guessed from its position and from the additional fact that it has a phenomenally small rainfall, Tiflis is stifling and intolerably hot, but in winter the same conditions render it a delightful residence, perfectly sheltered from the cold winds that sweep from the mountains and the plain to the south-

TIFLIS

east, and by its dry atmosphere admirably suited to people with weak lungs.

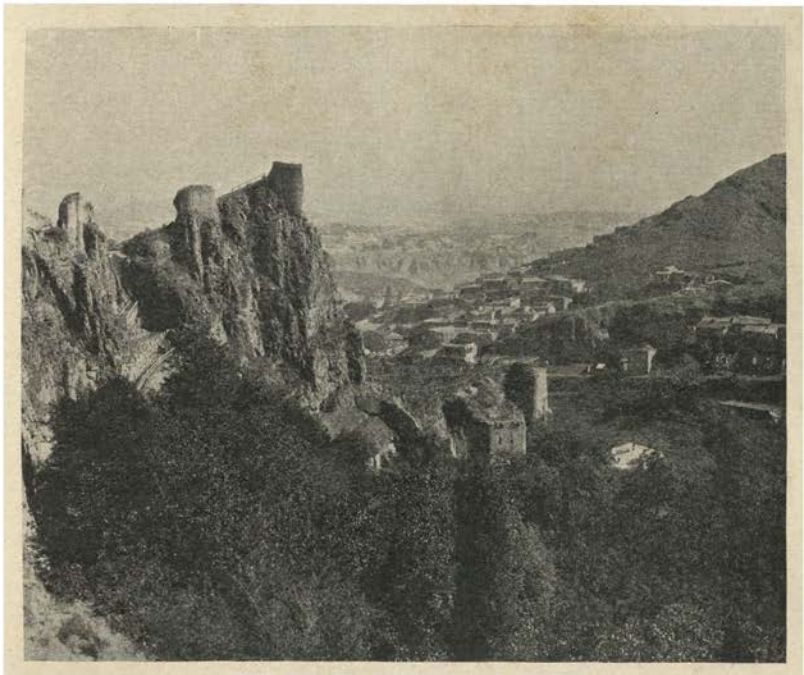
It is a place of great importance to modern Russia. It forms, to begin with, the end of the military road across the Caucasus, which, though the railway now goes round the eastern coast to Baku, is still the quickest way to Europe, and all the mails come over it by fast coach. It is midway between Baku and Batum; that is, between the Caspian and the Black Sea, between Europe and Asia when you go east and west, as well as when you go north and south. The railway is now open to Kars,

that frontier fortress which, not long ago the Russian objective, will some day be her base for an advance into Armenia and far beyond. Tiflis, in fact, is thinking of the future, as you are reminded when you go to the topographical department of the General Staff to buy the magnificent maps they sell, and see a dozen officers working busily over their drawing-boards.

And Russia has developed her Caucasian capital in a manner worthy of its importance. In the modern town the streets are wide and paved and lighted by electricity, the shops are large and handsome, there is a public garden with winding walks and fine trees, excellent tramways run in all directions, and the public carriages, leather-upholstered and rubber-tyred, are far superior to those of St. Petersburg or Moscow—in fact, the best I have seen anywhere. The official buildings are numerous and imposing—Russia always takes care of this. The cathedral is a magnificent edifice, the Governor-General's palace dignified without and splendid within, there is a new and elaborate opera-house, and of course a number of military buildings. The museum is extremely interesting for its collections of all the animals and birds of the Caucasus, all the geological products, and a fascinating series of figures and domestic implements illustrating the ethnology of all the local races. While I was there an agricultural exhibition was held, and the quality and variety of products shown were astonishing. Some of the vegetables were so remarkable that I wrote and asked for seeds, which were sent promptly by official post and are now germinating under the surprised eyes of a Hampshire gardener. In matters like this, let me remark once for all, the Russian authorities are courtesy itself to foreigners who approach them courteously and are genuinely interested in what they are doing. Finally, the Hôtel de Londres is the first really civilised and comfortable hotel I have found in Russia—and this is in Asia ! I dwell upon these matters because the striking fact about Tiflis is that Russian rule has made a handsome, clean, safe, civilised, and

merry little town out of a jumble of dirty, jarring Eastern races, outside her European frontier, and far from anywhere.

But one does not go to Asia to see Europe, and Rostom, the guide, in Circassian costume, with long poniard and war-medal, haunts the hall of the hotel. To test the German philologist, I ask him how many languages he speaks. He does not remember,



TIFLIS AND THE RUINS OF THE CITADEL

but proceeds to count them upon his fingers. Russian, Mingrelian—his native tongue—Georgian, Armenian, Persian, Lesghian, Gruznian—I can't remember them, and I don't know how to spell them, but it is an extraordinary list. And he needs them all in an hour's stroll through the bazaar. Ten minutes in a tramway from the hotel door transports you into a piece of Baghdad or Tehran, and one of the very few Eastern bazaars I have seen which has not its eye fixed, so to speak, upon the Western purchaser. A few things in the silversmiths' shops are

for the foreigner, but otherwise, if you go there, you go as the native goes, you see what the native sees, you haggle as the native haggles, and you get what the native gets. This is refreshing when one remembers the bazaar in Cairo, for instance, where the tourist buys with solemn precautions and secret glee things specially made for him in Birmingham or Germany, which an Oriental passes with a contemptuous shrug.

If one half of Tiflis is like Europe, the other half is purely Oriental. Narrow, steep, ill-paved streets; mysterious houses hiding the life within behind closed doors and shuttered windows; the merchant sitting among his wares—the silversmiths in one street, the arms-makers in another, the shoemakers, the carpet-dealers, the fruit-sellers, the perfume-venders, each trade in its own quarter. And what things to buy, if one has money and time—the two equally essential components of an Eastern bargain! Through this low doorway and behind this commonplace shop is a dark warehouse piled high with carpets in mountainous profusion. Here is every fraud ready for the unwary or unknowing purchaser, but here, also, if your eye is sharp and your tongue smooth and your experience trustworthy and your time and patience without limits, is a brocade from the palace of one of the old Khans of Nukha, vassals of Persia in time gone by; this is a silken carpet from Isfahan, in the golden days of Shah Abbas, two hundred years old, priceless; that rug was woven by Tekke girls in the tent of nomad Turkomans, a pattern never copied but preserved in memory from the times of Tamerlane; this drugget issued long ago from the loom of Kurdish women of Erivan; the roll of rainbow-coloured silk came slowly to light, like a dragon-fly above a reeking pond, in a mud hovel of the torture-town of Bokhara, fieriest hot-bed of Mussulman fanaticism. The merchant will show you, too, turquoises—handfuls of them, all small or of the worthless greenish hue. Many times you ask him if he has not bigger turquoises and he shakes his head. At the back of his iron strong-box, wrapped

in a dozen crumpled papers, he has a great one, of that marvellous and indescribable blue which nature has produced only in this stone. Will much persuasion wheedle it into sight for a moment, or much money secure its possession for ever? Maybe, but I have my doubts, and they are based upon the unchanging truth that at last, between East and West, pride of race is stronger than greed of gold. To console you, however, for the unattainable azure, you may find and carry off a blue scimetar from Daghestan, a wrought-iron staff surmounted by an ox-head with which some old Persian officer has led his men to battle, a Georgian pistol inlaid with silver *niello* work, and a choice bit of gold-encrusted ivory from Kazi-Kumyk.

A BIT OF OLD TIFLIS

But Tiflis, this "precipitate of history," these cross-roads between Europe and Asia, excites your wonder and enchains your recollection chiefly for its human conglomerate. Most of the speakers of its many tongues have their distinctive costume, and indeed their own well-marked faces. There is no mistaking the Tatars with their

hats in the shape of a truncated cone, the aquiline-featured Lesghians, the swarthy Persians with their long-pointed hats of astrakhan fur, the Armenians with their flat caps, the Turkomans in huge shaggy hats of sheepskin, the Würtembergers of the German colony in the old Swabian costume, and most marked of all, the Georgians in the *tcherkess*, with the *khazir*, the row of cartridge-cases, across the breast. The native gentleman, an officer of high rank and long service in war, who strides into the hotel dining-room in his uniform of chestnut and Indian red, jingling with small-arms and hung with medals even as a Zulu is strung with cowries, is certainly one of the most striking figures I have ever seen. In fact, I do not remember to have been in the society of so many distinguished-looking people in my life before; a group of princes of the blood, ambassadors and commanders-in-chief would have everything to learn from them in the matter of deportment. No matter who they may be—the Smiths and Joneses, possibly, of Georgia and Daghestan—their manners and their clothes hit off the choicest expressions of dignity and distinction. That full-skirted woollen coat, flying round the fine riding-boots, and hiding trousers of carmine silk; that tight-fitting body-part, open at the breast to

A CAUCASIAN TYPE—ROSTOM THE GUIDE

show a shirt of richest cream-colour, hooked smartly over the ribs and narrowly girdled at the waist by a belt of chased metal, worn very tight, from which hang silver-worked poniard, sabre, pistol-holster and other strange fittings, combine to form a costume of infinite spirit, to which the row of cartridges, sewn on a cunning slant on each side of the breast, are a splendid finish, even though the cartridges are but dummy bits of wood, with gold or silver heads. Added to all this, the port of the head in its black sheepskin hat, and the whole martial bearing, make every man a field-marshal and the hero of a hundred fights—to look at.

Are the women of Georgia as beautiful as we have always been told ? When they become matrons, which is at an early age, they are too stout and broad in the beam for beauty, but in their youth, I should judge from glimpses at windows and passing faces, there may well be extraordinary loveliness among them—the loveliness of perfectly chiselled features true to the racial type, large calm dark eyes, firm, full mouth, alabaster skin, indigo-black hair—the precise antithesis of the piquancy of irregular features and nervous temperament which generally passes for beauty among ourselves. These are women, you feel, whose lips would whisper passionate love or, if times allowed, sing high the song that sends their men to battle—whose fingers would grasp the dagger or fall lightly across the strings of the lute, with equal aptness. Dagger and war-song, however, are out of date in the Caucasus to-day.

One of the quaintest sights of the whole bazaar is its wine. The district of Kakhetia, not far from here, produces red and white wine, and a wine neither red nor white, but of the colour of tawny port and the taste of brown sherry. This is for the well-to-do; the people's wine, costing incredibly little, is thin and acid, but quite pure. Of course I have seen in many Eastern countries wine-skins and water-skins, but a whole ox filled with wine took me by surprise. There he lay at the *dukhan* door, on

his back, his feet and head cut off and the holes tied up, bloated, enormous. You call for a glass and the lace is loosed from his foreleg and out pours the wine. The wine-shop itself is below the street, and below it is a deeper cellar where a match shows row upon row of these truncated wine-filled beeves, a bovine catacomb. In the *dukhan* nearer the Persian bazaar I spent some rare hours, eating black bread, smoking tobacco from Isfahan, drink-

TIFLIS—WINE-SKINS AND THE WINE SHOP

ing the slender vintage from the foreleg of the *burdyuki*, and listening to thrilling tales of Shamyl from one who had fought against him for ten years.

Another experience of Tiflis is the bath. It is a luxurious, modern, tile-fronted building in the heart of the Armenian bazaar, belonging to a prince whose name escapes me. Abundant springs of water strongly impregnated with sulphuretted hydrogen supply it, and in its vaulted chambers, far below the street, there is no sound but the splash of the fountain and the rolling echo of one's own voice. The *masseur*, however, distinguishes

A WANDERING BEGGAR, TIFLIS

the bath of Tiflis. He is a Persian, speaking but a word or two of Russian. His head is shaved, round his waist a rag is twisted, and his feet are dyed orange. First he rubs you like the shampooer of Jermyn Street, then suddenly, as you lie face downwards on the marble slab, he is upon your back, his heels dug into your spine, his hands grasping your shoulders to increase the pressure, and slowly, with skilful appreciation of the lie of every muscle, his feet grind up and down your back—they encircle

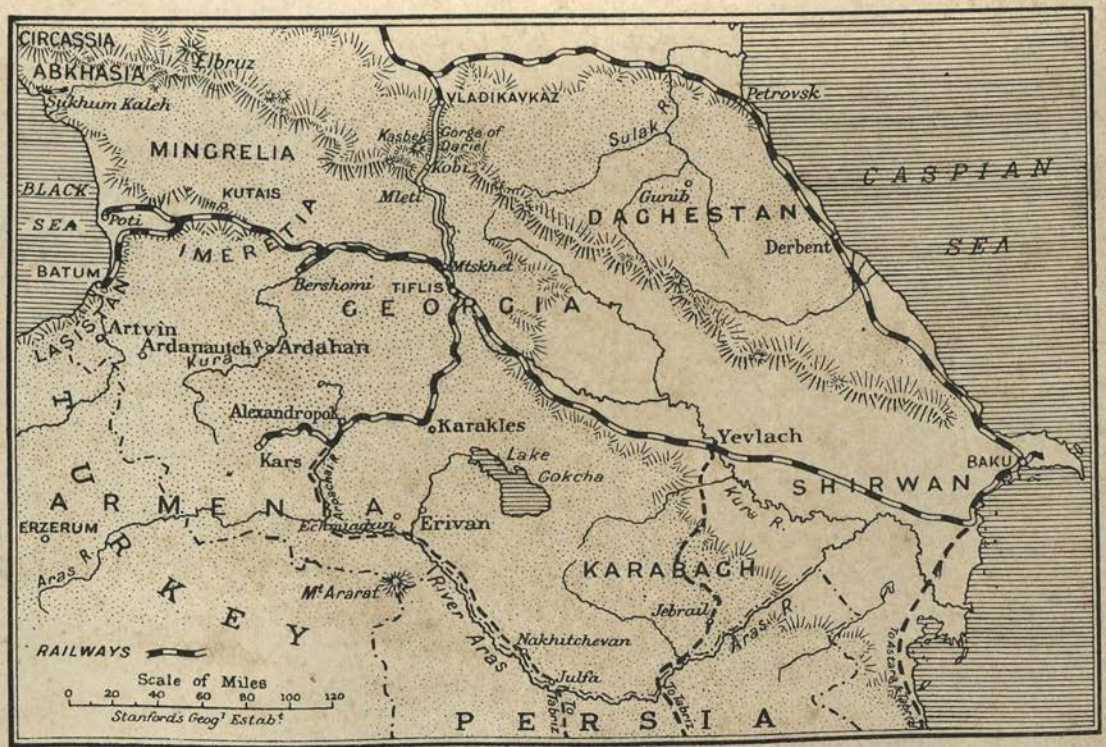
THE SHAMPOOER OF TIFLIS

your neck—they are on your head! Then he vaults lightly off, and in a moment, from a linen bag filled with soap, he has squeezed clouds of perfumed bubbles, and you are hidden in them from head to feet, as completely as if you had fallen into a snow-drift. So far, all is tolerable, if rather startling, but when, wrapped in linen and beturbaned, you call for a cigarette and he brings one, lights it between his own lips and would put it between yours, the prejudices of the West arise, and you repulse the well-meant attention of that orange-footed Oriental. The bath costs you six shillings, but cleanliness is always a luxury in the East.

It will occur to many readers, no doubt, to ask what is the

political condition of these strangely mingled and once vigorous nationalities, and how they are affected towards their great rulers. In spite of the enthusiasm they evoke, the small nationalities almost disappear politically in the face of the colossal interests of the Great Powers which control them directly or indirectly, and the Caucasus is no exception to this rule. Before the Russo-Turkish War the Georgians stood high in Russian favour; they held important public offices, and the social relations between them and Russian officials were cordial. During the war doubts arose as to their loyalty, and the Armenians took advantage of this to push their own interests. Their well-known trading and financial gifts were of much use to the Russians and very profitable to themselves. But the Armenians have shared the fate of the Georgians, for the Armenian troubles in Turkey bred a certain amount of real political agitation, and evoked fears of a great deal more, with the not unnatural result that the Russian authorities now cry a plague on both their houses, and exclude Georgians and Armenians alike from office and influence. This action, again, is naturally being followed by a recrudescence of national feeling, especially among the Georgians. The national costume, once almost abandoned, is now the fashion; the national literature is being fostered; and Georgian women talk less gossip and more politics. But all this has no serious significance. Mr. Oliver Wardrop, in his "Kingdom of Georgia" (1888), wrote: "Should Russia ever become involved in a great war, Georgia would undoubtedly declare her independence and endeavour to seize the Dariel Road; the Armenians and Lesghians would also revolt each in their own way." My own opinion is that any enemy of Russia that counted upon this would be disappointed; the time is past for a Georgian political nationality, unless, indeed, Russia should be already so hopelessly defeated as to break up of her own weight. I doubt much whether, in spite of their good looks and their martial clothes, the Georgians possess capacity for any struggle or for the organisation which it would

A CHAT AT THE WINE-SHOP, TIFLIS



RAILWAYS OF THE CAUCASUS (EXISTING, PROJECTED, AND UNDER CONSTRUCTION)

necessitate if successful. Sporadic risings there might be if Russia were defeated once or twice, but they would be crushed without the slightest difficulty, and the only chance of success they might have would be when Russia was too exhausted even to attempt to put them down. Moreover, I saw no reason why the Georgians should wish to revolt, for they are not oppressed in any way, they have practically all the chances that Russians themselves enjoy, they are treated very gently as regards military service, and it is perfectly certain that if for any cause Russia should cease to protect them, some other Power would have to do so, for they are now incapable of taking care of themselves or standing sword in hand, as they once did, between Europe and the pressing hordes of Asia. In a word, the little nationalities of the Caucasus present no political problem.

In a previous chapter I showed how the inevitable trend of Russia is to the sunrise and the warm weather. The Caucasus affords a further striking example of this. As may be seen by a glance at my map (which shows railways projected and under construction, not to be found, I believe, elsewhere), Russia is stretching out her arm rapidly to the south, toward Persia and its warm and commercial gulf which leads straight to India and the East, in the shape of roads and railways. Already a railway runs from Tiflis to Kars, and several other schemes are on foot for further facilities of transport in the same direction. A railway is already begun, and will be finished in three or four years, from Karakles, below Alexandropol, down the valley of the Arpa-chai to the valley of the Aras (Araxes), then by the side of the Aras to Erivan, and on to Nakhitchevan and Julfa on the Russo-Persian frontier. Another railway is under survey and consideration from Baku to Astara and Tabriz, with an alternative scheme from Yevlach, on the present line, through Jebrail to Tabriz. An important military road, about which not much is heard, runs from Batum to Artvin, thence to Ardanautch, thence to Ardahan, thence to Kars. It is metalled from Batum to Artvin, and is

being widened from Artvin to Ardanautch. It has been metalled and in use for some time from Ardahan to Kars. Plans and performances like these, at a time when money is scarce in Russia, mean only one thing. And I believe, though much secrecy is observed upon the matter, that the railway which Russia hopes to lay through Persia to the sea, the route of which has already been roughly surveyed, is intended to start on the frontier at Julfa, and run, *viâ* Ahar, to Tabriz, Tehran, Isfahan, and Yezd, and past Bunder Abbas to the Indian Ocean. But this railway raises an international question of extreme delicacy, to which I return later.*

Such is the Caucasus, in its various aspects—a rapid glance at a great subject. I hope I have gone a little way, at any rate, toward justifying my remark at the outset that it is perhaps on the whole the most interesting land of the world. It has been, as I said, unaccountably neglected, but I feel sure in advance of the thanks of any, whether travellers in search of new scenes or capitalists on the look-out for new enterprises, who take my advice and visit it for themselves.

* See Chapters XVII. and XXIV.

The *Times* has just learned, "from a trustworthy source," that the Russians have decided to proceed at once with the construction of a railway which will connect their Trans-Caspian line with the Persian province of Khorassan. This line will start from Askhabad and be carried to Meshed, and the construction is expected to be pushed forward rapidly. The line will enter Persian territory at Kettechinar, run up the Deregez Valley, and keep along the river side until it strikes the existing main road to Meshed between Durbadan and Imamkulich. A large party have been at work pegging out the line, and attached to this party have been M. Stroieff, Dragoman of the Meshed Russian Consulate, and the Ikram-ul-Mulk, late Karguzar of Kuchan. Difficulties were met with in passing through villages, but it is said that these have been arranged, and the Ikram-ul-Mulk has been given 12,000 roubles as a present. It is understood in Askhabad that the money for the railway has been sanctioned and is ready, and that the Russian Bank will open a branch almost immediately in Meshed to assist the financing of the works. A gentleman from St. Petersburg was named manager of the bank in Meshed, another official was to come from Teheran, and Ali Askar Khan, the interpreter of the State Bank, Askhabad, was also under orders to proceed to Meshed. "There is," the *Times* adds, "a feeling of great uneasiness amongst the official classes in Meshed, as it is impossible to predict what the advent of this railway means." It means that Russia is hurrying upon her "historic mission" in view of Germany's haste upon the enterprise described in Chapter XVII.

CHAPTER XV

THE OIL-WELLS OF BAKU

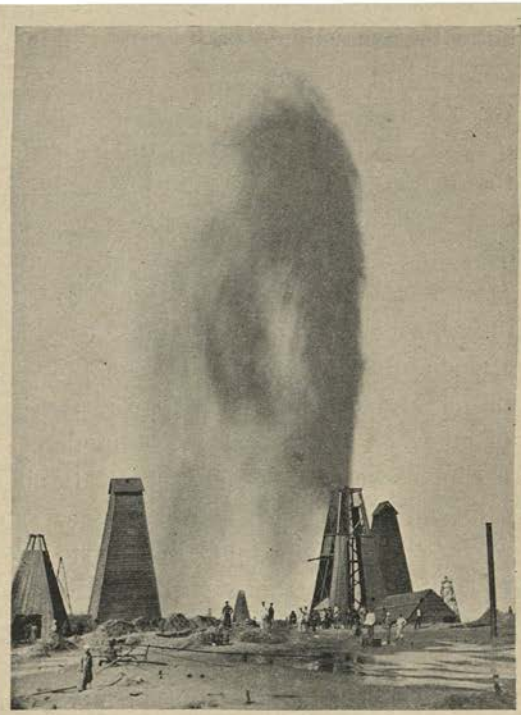
FATE has thrown a good many strange sights in my way, but I think the oil-wells of Baku are as strange as any. Directly after reaching the hotel I was called to the telephone, and invited by Mr. Tweedy, at Balakhani, six miles away, to spend the night there and see the wells next day. So I found myself, after dark, driving from the little station of Balakhani to the headquarters of the Russian Petroleum and Liquid Fuel Company. The mud was a foot deep, there was no road in particular, but the droschky-driver took the direction which promised the best chance of escaping an upset, and we rocked about till I was quite resigned to find myself floundering. The surroundings were positively weird. Every few yards a pyramidal structure, huge and ill-defined in the dark, towered up; within each was machinery hard at work, and mysterious bangings and splashings issued; in boiler-houses the lurid glow and fierce roar of petroleum furnaces made night alarming; and the whole air was thick with the reek of oil. I longed for morning to bring some sort of unity into this peculiar Hades.

With daylight came not only unifying knowledge, but also fascination. To a man with imagination the business of petroleum-getting must combine in itself the things which delight the gold prospector, the sportsman, the surgeon, the mechanician and the gambler. Like the prospector, the oil-seeker may look long in vain, and then suddenly run full tilt against riches. Like the sportsman, he may have the quarry just within his reach, and then in a second lose it. Like the surgeon, he uses instru-

ments to perform strange and delicate tasks in the dark, guided only by a fine sense of touch and a knowledge of the body in which he is working. Like the mechanician, he must always be inventing new and more ingenious tools. Like the gambler, he ranges headlong over rising and falling values. After the pen, I think the oil-borer would be my choice of implement wherewith to solve the great problem.

To leave generalities and come to plain facts, this is in brief the story of an oil-well. The mysterious processes of nature, whether animal or vegetable—probably the former—which produce petroleum in the bowels of the earth, have taken place in an unusual degree under the eastern shore of the Caucasian peninsula, where the town of Baku has risen—and where, I may incidentally add, this town has increased by twenty-five per cent. in fifteen months, where house rents have doubled in the same time, and where you may see a string of camels crossing a tramway line under an electric light. This petroleum-bearing land used to be leased by the Russian Government at a nominal rental; now it is put up to auction. A certain number of pouds (a poud is thirty-six lb.) of oil is supposed to be available for a certain area, and the bidding is by kopecks (say farthings) per poud of that number. Having acquired the land, the concessionaire proceeds to sink his wells. First he erects the pyramidal wooden structure, about seventy feet high, called the "derrick," with a large grooved wheel, like that over a colliery shaft, at its apex. He puts in an engine and a winding drum, and then the digging begins. It is of the first importance to have as wide a shaft as possible, because the wider the shaft the greater the dimension of the "baler," or elongated bucket, in which the oil is ultimately brought to the surface, and therefore the greater the yield of oil per diem and the larger the profit. So nowadays the first tubes of wrought-iron of which the well consists may be as wide as twenty-eight or thirty inches. A kind of huge spade, weighing perhaps half a ton, is suspended from a beam, which balances

like the beam of a beam-engine. This spade is fixed to its shaft by a sort of bayonet catch, and when the beam lifts the whole apparatus a man standing over the well gives it a half turn, and the spade falls two feet, striking the ground a heavy blow, the beam allows the shaft to fall upon it, pick it up and raise it again, the man gives another half turn, the spade falls again, and so on for hours with extraordinary rapidity, the spade falling perhaps thirty times a minute. This is known as the "free fall" system, from the German *Freifall*. After a while the earth is extracted by means of a colossal shell-auger, and the iron tube is lowered into place.



A "FOUNTAIN" AT BAKU

The spades are of all shapes and sizes, and so far all is plain sailing. But by-and-by accidents happen. Spades break, tubes collapse under the enormous pressure necessary to force them into place, steel ropes and chains give way and precipitate the whole apparatus into the well, or the apparatus gets twisted or broken and jams fast perhaps a thousand feet below the surface. Or perhaps even a wrench or a heavy bolt falls into the well—quite enough to prevent

the "free fall" from working. Then the fun begins—not that the well-owner regards it as fun at all. But the business of picking up these things seems to me an intoxicating task. Remember that your accident has happened perhaps 1500 feet underground, in a tube perhaps a foot in diameter, perhaps only six inches, for, as the well goes deeper, its diameter decreases. You do not know what the accident is—you only know that something, perhaps everything, has gone to smash down there. Or you may know that you have a ton of broken, twisted iron jammed tight in the narrow iron tube, with a quarter of a mile of wire rope or chain piled up pell-mell on the top of it. Your business is to get it all out—and the oil-borer does get it all out. In his workshop are laid side by side scores of surgical instruments—tweezers, pincers, forceps, probes, snares, *écraseurs*, expanding things which grasp a tube by the inside, revolving knives which cut a three-inch iron bar or a 12-inch tube, eccentric hooks which put straight anything lying on its side, so that the pincers can seize it, and in fact a replica of every ghastly implement of modern surgery that I know, except a speculum. There is this little difference, however, that each of these instruments weighs a quarter of a ton or more, that a whole day is not too much in which to lower it, let it do its work, or fail to do it, and hoist it up again, and that the oil-surgeon has nothing whatever to guide him except the light of pure imaginative genius and the waggle in his hand of a wire rope which has half a ton dangling from it a quarter of a mile below. The reader should not now be surprised when I add that in a moment something drops into the well, and that it sometimes takes the most skilful engineer six months to pick it up. I looked with profound respect upon the man who accomplishes such things. He happened to be a Caucasian prince, but that had nothing to do with my admiration. Never in my life have I seen anything which demanded such infinite patience. Waiting for the Foreign Office to publish a Blue-book is child's play in comparison.

But at length the engineer has his splendid reward. The oil stratum is reached, he rolls affectionately in his hand the slimy sand that the digger brings up—he is sure there is oil! So to the wire rope a hollow cylinder, twenty to thirty feet long and an inch or two less in diameter than the lowest tubes, with a plunge-valve at the bottom, is attached, and cautiously lowered. It comes back by-and-by, the valve is pushed open as it is gently lowered upon a board, and out pours a quarter of a ton of sand, slime, water—and the precious oil. At last it is only oil, and then the well is pumped night and day till it runs dry.

It takes on an average fifteen months to dig a well, and may cost five or six thousand pounds. The tubes alone for a well 2000 feet deep cost £3000. But perhaps it will give you five hundred tons of oil a day. The average life of a well may be said to be three years, but of course it is often vastly more. There is, it must be added, the horrid chance—rare hereabouts—that after all your boring you may find nothing. Three miles from here a Russian well-owner sank a well 1995 feet and failed to get a trace of oil. But, on the other hand—and this is where the gambler's excitement comes in—you may have the delirious joy of getting a "fountain," and then hats are thrown up and dividends mount skyward. A "fountain" is an artesian well of oil which bursts upward with incredible force and gives you as much oil in a minute for nothing as you could pump in twenty-four hours of labour and expense. Perhaps it blows the huge baler through the derrick roof and into somebody else's boiler-house, knocks the derrick itself into splinters, hurls up great stones like cannon-balls, buries the machinery in sand and slime and oil, and floods the reservoirs and roads—*nitchevo*, the more the better, it is coining gold for its lucky owners. The Russian Petroleum Company had a "fountain" once which gave forty million pouds of oil in two months. The world went very well then. Curiously enough, a fountain made its welcome appearance on the same property the very day I went to say good-bye to Mr. Tweedy, its managing director

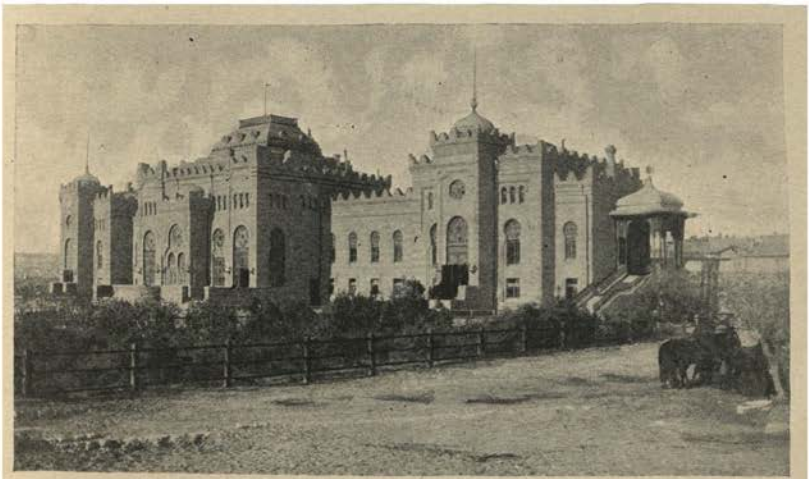
in London, whom by good luck I found at Baku, and he had of course rushed off to see it. This is a good opportunity for me to say how much I am indebted to Mr. Tweedy for the opportunities of studying and understanding the business of oil-getting. His knowledge of the subject is minute and profound, he has rendered great services to the successful investment of British capital in Baku, and after what I have written it is perhaps hardly necessary to add that his enthusiasm is contagious.

Such is, in hasty outline, the business of oil-getting on its mechanical side. Imagine a couple of thousand of these black derricks crowded together, with a network of little canals, reservoirs dug in the ground, and pipes innumerable just laid about, one above another, exactly as they happened to lie most conveniently—the pipes which carry off the oil to the reservoirs at a little distance, the whole place ceaselessly reeking, smoking, steaming, and humming, and you know what Balakhani looks like, and why it seemed so strange to me when I drove through it at night.

Since so much British capital is invested in this district certain statistics concerning the production of oil may be read with interest, especially since they point to some important conclusions regarding the future prospects of the industry. The number of firms and companies engaged in 1899 was 160, owning 1357 active wells. Of these firms 62 sprang up during the previous two years, and 26 of them were still at the boring stage. All attempts to "strike oil," in spite of extensive and deep boring, outside the five proved areas of the Apsheron Peninsula, namely, Bibi-Eibat and the great oil-field formed by Balakhani, Sabuntchi, Romani and Binagadi, have proved wholly unsuccessful. The total output for 1899* (to which the Binagadi area contributed very little) was 2,167,801,130 gallons. This was over 162,000,000 gallons more than in 1898, but though this great increase looks

* The figures here given are taken from the report of the official Russian supervisor of the petroleum industry at Baku, as published in the official *Viestnik Finanzof*.

very satisfactory at first sight, further examination gives it a less encouraging aspect. In the first place, the relative increase compared with previous years shows a marked decline; and second, these increases are nothing like so great as the increases in energy and expenditure in boring operations. In 1899 the enormous sum of £2,600,000 was spent on boring alone, and 572,761 feet of wells were bored, against 402,605 feet in 1898—an increase



THE RAILWAY STATION, BAKU

of over 42 per cent. Thus for a 42 per cent. increase of effort, only an 8 per cent. increase of output was obtained. This is not quite so bad as it looks, for a number of wells, especially on the Bibi-Eibat area, were only commenced in the second half of the year, and could not have become productive. But it points to the serious fact that the whole oil-field is becoming less productive. This conclusion is clearly borne out by other figures. The number of inactive wells, for instance, has increased by nearly 50 per cent., whereas the number of active wells has increased by only 24 per cent. Of the five areas, moreover, only Sabuntchi and Balakhani showed an absolute increase of output. Most significant of all, however, are the facts that the

"fountains" —*i.e.* wells where the oil is forced to the surface by confined gas, showing that the seam has no other sufficient outlet—have decreased by one-half; and that the average productiveness of wells has regularly diminished, while their average depth has as regularly increased. This is strikingly shown by the official figures when arranged thus:

	Average Production per Well in Gallons.	Average Depth per Well in Feet.
1895	2,578,996	853
1896	2,171,922	895
1897	1,926,292	897
1898	1,811,672	917
1899	1,597,495	937

These figures are again confirmed by the fact that whereas in 1895 only 2 per cent. of the wells were "deep" ones—*i.e.* over 1400 feet in depth—and gave only 5.4 per cent. of the total output, in 1899 over 10 per cent. of the wells were "deep," and gave over 29 per cent. of the total output.

The conclusion is thus unavoidable that the upper levels of oil-strata are becoming exhausted, and that in the future the supply of petroleum from the Baku district will depend more and more upon deep borings, until these in their turn become exhausted, or the extreme depth possible for boring and pumping is reached. In other words, the approaching exhaustion of this great oil-field is unquestionably foreshadowed, though no man can foretell when this point will be reached. I happen to know, by the way, that Russian engineers have discovered another oil-field, which they believe to be of the highest value, in an entirely different district, at a considerable distance from Baku. For certain good reasons no particulars concerning this have yet been made public. It is also practically a certainty that valuable oil-fields will be found in other parts of the Caucasus itself.

I should say, however, though of course I speak entirely as a non-expert, that the above statistics and considerations deserve

the careful attention of investors in oil-bearing properties at Baku.

From Baku my way now lies across the Caspian Sea, and to the wild, world-famous towns of the heart of Asia, once so far away that a man could make a reputation by riding to one of them, now so intimately connected with the commerce of the world that the price of cotton is telegraphed to them every morning from Liverpool.

CHAPTER XVI

THE TRANS-CASPIAN RAILWAY: ACROSS CENTRAL ASIA BY TRAIN

NOT many years ago—since a middle-aged man left college, in fact—a journey to the heart of Central Asia involved several curious preliminaries. First of all, making a will, because the chances of your coming back again were slender. Second, a perfect colloquial knowledge of at least one Eastern language. Third, an Oriental cast of countenance, and much skill in disguising it. Fourth, a most unusual love of adventure and stock of personal courage. For you were going to places as suspicious as Mecca, as hostile to the stranger as Thibet, as fanatical as nowhere else, and amongst other things you were running the risk of a fate unequalled in sheer horror in the whole wide world, namely, being eaten alive by vermin trained for the purpose. The qualifications mentioned above were possessed by Arminius Vambéry, which accounts for his successful journey and safe return, and the fate alluded to was suffered by our countrymen Stoddart and Conolly in the 'forties.

Nowadays the undertaking is simpler and less perilous. To begin with, you apply to the Russian authorities for special permission to travel in the Trans-Caspian military district. Usually they accord it; if they do not, you don't go. Supposing they do, you betake yourself to Baku, by the route you have read about here, or some other; you drive down in the evening to the wharf of the Caucasus and Mercury Steamship Company—stopping on the way, if you have the proper traveller's foresight, to buy a thousand cigarettes, a bottle of something for strictly medical

use, and a dozen tins of sardines ; you take a ticket for Krasnovodsk, and a perspiring Persian carries your luggage on board a sturdy little paddle-boat, built thirty years ago on the Tyne. If you are lucky, you travel with the same captain that I did, who knows about as much French as you know Russian, but whose geniality is wholly independent of any philological basis ; you

THE LANDING-STAGE AT KRASNOVODSK

have a jovial little supper with him ; you turn into a comfortable cabin ; and some time after you are asleep the ship paddles out into the blue Caspian, her nose turned toward the rising sun. Not much danger so far, and disguise superfluous.

Eighteen hours is the allotted time for the sea-crossing, and in fine weather it is enough. Coming back we took forty, for there was a wind and sea that at times made us think it would have been safer, after all, to be in old-fashioned Central Asia, to say nothing of the man we lost overboard. Going East, however, the Caspian was like a pond, and on the crowded decks, with their conspicuous division of quarters for "Men," "Women," and

"Persians," happiness reigned, and everybody ate sunflower-seeds and brewed tea. The oily reek of Baku was far behind the Caspian was as still as a lake, and at last the little paddle-boat turned sharply round a sand-spit and brought into view a hundred flat white houses, scattered at the foot of converging bare brown hills, like a few crystals of sugar at the bottom of a brown cup, and we were at Krasnovodsk—"Red Water," though why so called I cannot tell, for there is no fresh water there at

THE RAILWAY STATION AT KRASNOVODSK

all, except what they produce every day in the big distillery, and the sea is a deep Italian blue.

Here, according to some authorities, in bygone ages the mighty Oxus emptied itself into the sea, so that from Peter the Great's time till now there has always been a project of bringing it back to its old bed. The town is new, for the original starting-point of the Trans-Caspian Railway was at Uzun-Ada, farther to the south, in a bay which proved unsuitable for shipping. Mud-brown mountains hem it closely round; not a green leaf or a drop of fresh water is in sight, the place is as burnt and dry as the inside of a baker's oven. And in November a hot and dazzling sun is still beating down into it! The long, handsome white

stone building, of consistent Oriental architecture, is the railway station, for Russia lays solidly and artistically the foundation-stones of her empire, no matter how remote they may be, and there stands the train, all white, ready for its incredible journey. The next most conspicuous building is the distillery, which supplies both the town and the line, and the next is a sort of military depôt, half barracks and half prison—a halting-place between Europe and Asia for soldiers and convicts alike.

No foreigner, as I have said, lands at Krasnovodsk without special permission; Russia watches all strangers on her frontiers —and England's—hereabouts. Mine was obtained from St. Petersburg through the British Foreign Office before I started. The wooden pier was crowded with civilians and porters—Persian *hamals*—and, where the steamer was to touch, a group of uniformed police stood, with a military band behind them. When we were within a few yards the music struck up, and as soon as the gang-plank was in position the chief of police came aboard, and nobody else. The captain awaited him. Were there any foreigners on board? One—myself. My name? An official list was produced from a portfolio and consulted. *Pazholst!*—"If you please"—and I was politely invited ashore. In St. Petersburg it is the official pleasure to smile when you speak of special permission being necessary for the Trans-Caspian Railway. They take it seriously enough at Krasnovodsk. I may add that after this original formality—with the single exception of the Chief of Police, an army Colonel at Askhabad, who curtly summoned me to his office and kept me waiting for an hour and a half, and then charged me before all his subordinates with being in Central Asia without permission, the fact being that not only had I special permission but also the highest official letters of personal introduction to all the principal authorities—I received the greatest possible courtesy and assistance from the Russian officials everywhere, a courtesy going so far on one occasion as a mounted torchlight escort of Cossacks. It is, however, but natural that

the Russians should be ready to show what they have done in Central Asia. They have every reason to be proud of it.

On the Trans-Caspian Railway there are two kinds of train—the train and the post-train. And the difference between them is that the latter has a restaurant-car and the former has not. The post-train has an extra passenger-carriage, and the train has several freight-cars, but the speed is the same and the discomfort is the same. For what the Russian railway service gives you in extra comfort on the magnificent Siberian Express, it takes out of you in extra fatigue and dirt on the Trans-Caspian. The train that awaited me was the post-train and consisted of five corridor carriages, the last being a restaurant-car, all of them painted white. The tender of the engine was an oil-tank, and behind it, on a flat truck, was an enormous wooden tub, to hold water, for in Central Asia there is little fuel, and water is the most precious commodity that exists. But a glance at the train raised a most painful suspicion, which a visit to the ticket-office confirmed—there is not a first-class carriage on the Trans-Caspian Railway! It was not snobbery which evoked one's consternation at this discovery. A thousand miles of a slow, hot, dusty journey lay before me, and even in European Russia the prospect of a thousand miles in a second-class carriage would be far from pleasant, while in Central Asia, with ample experience in other lands of what a native crowd is, it was appalling. Let me say at once that it more than fulfilled all my expectations. The ordinary second-class, too, has

THE TRANS-CASPIAN TRAIN

narrow, flat wooden seats, with thin, hard cushions spread on them. After a couple of nights on one of these you are stiff for a week. There is a carriage which has stuffed seats, but it is half second and half third, and the toilette arrangements are all in the third-class half. Moreover, in the stuffed cashions are passengers without number who pay no fare. I still wriggle as I think of those carriages, for on one never-to-be-forgotten stage I became perforce what a recent Act of Parliament calls a "verminous person." Now, to go unwashed is bad, but to share your washing with third-class Russian Asiatic passengers is not only worse—it is impossible. Furthermore, while the railway authorities have separate third-class carriages for Europeans and natives, the second class is open to both. Their idea probably was that the higher fare would deter the native passenger, but this is far from being the case, so prosperous has the sedentary Sart become under Russian rule. Therefore your carriage is invaded by a host of natives with their innumerable bundles, their water-pots and their tea-pots, their curiosity and their expectoration. They do not understand the unwritten law which reserves to you the seat you have once occupied; they dump themselves and their belongings anywhere, and they are very difficult to detach; they are entirely amiable; they follow your every movement for hours with an unblinking curiosity; and they smell strong. I hope I have nothing but goodwill for my Eastern fellow-man, and I assuredly often find him more interesting than people with white skins, but I have the greatest objection to passing days and nights crowded close with him in an overheated railway carriage. And if I expatiate somewhat upon this minor topic it is because the Trans-Caspian railway journey is such a remarkable experience and affords such rare and vast interests, that everybody who can afford the time and money should take it, and the Russian authorities should do all in their power to make the actual travelling as tolerable as possible. As things are at present, I should not advise any lady to come who is not prepared for some of the most personally

objectionable sides of "roughing it." Prince Hilkoff, however, Minister of Railways, is so prompt to make any improvement or to inaugurate any new enterprise that if this plaint should meet his eye it may well be that no future traveller will have occasion to make it. There is also one other little matter which calls for attention. Formerly the train at Krasnovodsk waited for the steamer from Baku. Now the local railway authority causes it to start precisely at three, even if the steamer is coming into harbour. So it has happened that the train has started without a single passenger, while the wretched people arriving by steamer have had to pass twenty-three hours in some railway carriages, there being nothing of the nature of an hotel at Krasnovodsk. Such an absurdity should be corrected, but the fact that there is a railway here at all is so marvellous that every other consideration is insignificant beside it.

There is a strange medley on the platform before we start. Crowds of ragged porters, jostling and jabbering in Persian and broken Russian, and carrying huge bundles of native luggage tied in carpets; a few civilians—merchants and commercial travellers; Armenian "drummers," sharp and swarthy, for Persian firms; a score of officers in various uniforms; several soldiers sweating in heavy grey overcoats—they badly need a bath—and old, patched breeches of red morocco leather; three officers in the handsome green and gold of the *pogranichnaya strazha*, the frontier guards, soldiers and customs-officers in one; specimens of most of the natives of Central Asia; and myself, the only foreigner. There are no fewer than eleven parallel lines of rail, for either military purposes or freight accommodation, as maybe needed. At three o'clock we start, and between the bare brown hills and the still blue sea the train runs slowly along for hours. It carries, as I said, its oil-fuel, and its water in a huge wooden tank on a truck behind the engine, for the country is a desert, and the stations are merely the little white houses of the employees, appearing as specks in the wilderness. The low indented coast-

line, within a few yards of our right, reminds me of the Mediterranean coast, between Marseilles and Nice, but here there are in every bay thousands of white-breasted ducks. For twenty-five miles the line runs across an absolutely barren plain; sunset finds us traversing a salty waste, dotted with scanty bushes, and when I look out of the window in the middle of the night, a bright moon shines on the same desolate scene. But at eight o'clock next

GEOK TEPE, THE OLD RAMPARTS AND THE NEW RAILWAY

morning comes a sudden thrill. Over a little station are written the magic words "Geok Tepe," and I rush out to see if anything remains to tell of the terrible battle and more terrible slaughter of 1881. Sure enough, on the opposite side of the line, only fifty yards away, is the whole story, and luckily the train is accidentally delayed long enough to enable me to make a hasty visit to the historic spot.

It is a rectangular fortress, a thousand yards square, formed by a high and thick earthen wall and rampart. The sides are riddled with bullet-holes—not a square yard is untouched, while scores of gaps in the top show where shells have burst. Several complete breaches gape wide, and one whole corner is gone—that is where the mine exploded, giving both the signal and the occasion for the final attack. Here raged for three whole

weeks an almost uninterrupted battle, fought by both sides with a ferocious courage never surpassed in history; here Skobelef, and Kuropatkin under him, won their greatest laurels; here Russia became mistress of Trans-Caspia; here died a gallant and an interesting race. The Tekke Turkomans first drove back the Russian General Lomakin; then they completely routed Lazaref at this very spot, and swept in triumph over the whole country. For two years Skobelef made his preparations, and on January 1, 1881, he delivered his first attack upon this Turkoman stronghold with 8000 troops and more than fifty guns. Inside was the flower of the Turkoman race, with 7000 women and children. Their felt tents were set on fire by petroleum bombs, artillery rained shell and shrapnel on them, gradually the trenches drew nearer; but they fought with a desperation which kept the Russians at bay for three weeks, and on more than one occasion they routed the invaders in a hand-to-hand struggle and slashed them to death in their own trenches, leaving Russian heads and limbs scattered about. But the inevitable end came, and the slaughter of every male left in the fortress, and, after it, that terrible Cossack pursuit of flying men and women for ten miles. Opinions differ as to this part of the struggle. What is certain is, that never since that time has a Turkoman hand been raised against Russia, nor ever will be. If you would strike only once, and thus be more merciful in the end, you must strike hard, was Skobelef's motto in dealing with Orientals, as it has been that of all who have understood the Eastern character. Trans-Caspia has been as peaceful as paradise since then. But Turkoman brides cost few cattle for many years, as all the bridegrooms lay beneath Geok Tepe, and the knell of the Turkoman, so hospitable to strangers, so terrible in his raids, so devoted to his proud steed, so independent and gay in his moving home, was sounded. He died as he had lived, and the stone crosses in the gaps in his fortress wall tell how many Russians, as fearless as himself, went with him where brave dead soldiers go.

With a natural desire to perpetuate the memory of their own victories, the Russians have built between the railway station and the ruins a pretty little museum of white stone. In front of it stands a Turkoman cannon, captured by them from the Persians in one of their innumerable raids. This has its glorious story, too, for though it was mounted on the ramparts of Geok Tepe the Turkomans did not know how to use it, and, having captured some Russian artillerymen, they ordered them to fire it on their own comrades, or be slaughtered on the spot. The Russians loyally chose death. In the museum are portraits of Skobelef and the other commanders, and a collection of Turkoman guns and swords—poor tools against artillery and petroleum bombs, throwing the bravery of these nomad horsemen into still higher relief. I ran up the rough earthen steps leading to the shattered ramparts and looked through them at the busy station, the white train, and the groups of officers strolling up and down the platform. It was the advance of Russia at a glance.

For some time now we have had the mountains to our right, and the country has become more populated, though the herbage is still thin, and long strings of camels wind across the plain. The Turkoman mud houses are hardly visible, but the villages of Khirghiz *kibitkas*, round felt tents, make picturesque groups. There is neither cutting nor embankment, the line being simply laid upon the surface of the plain. When General Annenkof was building it, with almost superhuman energy and a confident enthusiasm which events have more than justified, everything required—rails, sleepers, men, food, water, protection—had to be moved forward by a train always following the railhead. Even to-day a large proportion of the stopping-places are just stations, and nothing else—a house, a storehouse embedded in the ground as a protection against both heat and cold, a well, built round with sloping stones and planted around with trees—the

only trees in the landscape, a few shaggy black cattle, and often, too, a little unfenced cemetery in the open desert, with half a dozen wooden crosses to mark its site. The station-master and his family who live in these houses have no nearer neighbours than their fellow-officials at the stations on either side of them, and no connection with the world except by the one passenger train daily in each direction, whose arrival is the chief daily event at every place. At Askhabad, the administrative centre of Trans-Caspia, where we arrived an hour and a half after leaving Geok Tepe, a military band played us in, a crowd was waiting on the platform, and an officer of gendarmes, recognising me as a foreigner, became anxious and made many pointed inquiries. East and West mingled here in curious fashion—elegant ladies escorted by smart officers, alongside big Turkomans in mulberry-coloured dressing-gowns and enormous hats of shaggy black sheepskin, their bare feet thrust into thick leather shoes.

From Askhabad a carriage road of one hundred and seventy miles runs across the Persian frontier to Meshed, a town of the greatest interest to the two rival nations of Asia. It has a flourishing trade with Russia, Afghanistan, and thence with India and Bokhara. After Mecca and Kerbela (near Baghdad) it is the holiest goal of Moslem pilgrims, of whom 100,000 are said to visit the tomb of the *imam* Reza every year. The Persian schismatic Mohammedans have their headquarters there in a mosque whose doors are studded with rubies, and whose library contains over a thousand Korans. But far more important than either commerce or creed, Meshed "the Holy" is only one hundred and ninety-five miles from Herat as the crow flies, and a road two hundred and thirty miles long connects the prosperous Persian town and the Afghan fortress supposed to be the key to the invasion of India. Therefore Russia and England keep very active rival intelligence departments there and struggle diplomatically for influence. The proximity of Meshed has perhaps

something to do with the fact that Askhabad is the military centre of this part of Russian Central Asia, with a garrison of 10,000 men and stores of every kind on a war footing. A few years ago the tea and indigo of India used to supply Central Asia from this centre, but when Russia became paramount here her first care was to destroy British trade by excessive duties and even direct prohibition, and in this task she has been only too successful.

After Askhabad the desert once more, till at last cultivated, irrigated land appears, and at each little station is a great heap of bales of cotton, for the harvest has just been gathered, awaiting transport. It has come for the most part on camels, and while their owners chat these are tethered in a quaint manner, tied nose and tail in a vicious circle, so that each is fast between two others. Midway in the burnt plain is a magnificent old fortress, its good preservation telling how few years have passed since these same plains held the wild life of immemorial time. A belt of fertile land extends for fifteen miles from these mountains to the south, deliciously green in spring, but now only covered with dwarfed scrub—tamarisk, I think. In summer the heat is terrible, rising to 155° at midday, and even now, in mid-November, one is glad to get out of the sun.

At nine o'clock at night and 556 miles from our starting-point, another sensation. Most readers will remember how the word "Merv" once rang through England, thanks to O'Donovan and Marvin and Vambéry, as the possible cause of war with Russia, whose absorption of Central Asia brought her here in 1884—just a year before Parliament, at Gladstone's behest, voted £11,000,000 of war-money at a sitting in view of Russia's next step south; how the fears of some people that Russia meant to seize it, and beyond it, all Central Asia, gave rise to the sarcastic adjective "mervousness"; how Russia assured us that she did not mean to take it; how she took it soon afterwards; and how she built from it a line with no other

possible object but, should need arise, to hurry troops toward India. Well, the train slackens speed on the second evening, draws up to a long platform full of brilliant uniforms whose wearers are escorting elegant ladies, while a band strikes up a gay tune, and your window stops exactly opposite the word "Merv" over the central doorway. You cannot quite believe it. But it is a fact, for the whole oasis of Merv, one of the most fertile spots in the world, is as Russian as Riga, and when you say "Merv" in Central Asia you mean a long, low, neat stone railway station, lit by a score of bright lamps in a row, where the train changes engines, while in a busy telegraph-office a dozen operators sit before their clicking instruments; and if you are a Russian officer or official you mean also a brand-new town where a pestilent malarial fever is sure to catch you sooner or later, and very likely to kill you.

But Merv has long ceased to be a Russian boundary, for in the dark you can see a branch line of railway stealing southward across the plain. This is the famous Murghab Branch, the strategical line of one hundred and ninety miles along the river to the place the Russians call Kushkinski Post, close to the frontier of Afghanistan, a short distance from Kushk itself and only eighty miles from Herat.* The Russians keep this line absolutely secret, no permission to travel by it having ever been granted to a foreigner. My own permission for Central Asia read, "With the exception of the Murghab Branch."

This line is purely strategic and military. Neither trade nor agriculture is served by it; nor would anybody ever buy a ticket by it, if it were open to all the world, as it may be before long. Moreover, it runs through such a fever-haunted district that Russian carpenters, who can earn two roubles a day on it, throw up the job and go back to earn fifty kopecks at home. The line is

* This line has since been prolonged a few miles to Chahel Dokhteran, on the very frontier, and a branch is building through Penjdeh to Maruchak, where the Murghab River crosses the frontier.

simply a deliberate military measure against Great Britain. It serves at present only the purpose of facilitating the invasion of India, or rather of enabling Russia to squeeze England by pretending to prepare the first steps of an invasion of India, whenever such a pretence may facilitate her diplomacy in Europe. In simple truth, it places Herat at her mercy. The Merv-Kushk line, I may add, is now completed, and two regular trains a week run over it, at the rate of something less than ten miles an

A GLASS OF TEA WHILE THE TRAIN STOPS

hour, reaching the Afghan frontier terminus in eighteen hours. The country on both sides of it is a desert, with tufts of hardy scrub. Wild pig abound, and pheasants, of which this country is the original home. The fever I have spoken of attacks a man suddenly, the spleen swells, he turns as yellow as in jaundice, becomes unconscious on the second day, and then recovers or dies. Those working on the railway say that recovery depends upon whether there is a train immediately after the attack to take you to the hospital at Merv. If you have just missed the bi-weekly train, you die. But the epidemic will doubtless

diminish in frequency and in virulence as there is less necessity to dig up the ground. In the East—even at Hongkong, for instance—stirring of the soil almost always produces illness. Armenians, the pioneers of trade in this part of the world, are trying to open up trade at Kushk Post, but hitherto with little success. From the Russian post the Afghan frontier is visible, and the Russian sentries can be discerned with the naked eye. There is one line of them on the top ridge of the hills, and another upon the slope beyond. Beyond these are the Afghan posts.

Kushkinski Post itself consists of about a score of houses, with something like fifty white inhabitants, apart from soldiers. There are no white women in the settlement, and nothing like an hotel. The officers have established a little military club, where they take their meals. During the great heat of summer, ice, or rather snow, is brought regularly by train. At first the only fortification, I was told, consisted of a series of detached ramparts, within which the artillery was quartered. The infantry and Cossack barracks, and the officers' quarters—little grey one-storey houses—are in the town. A temporary line of rails, however, had been laid down from the main line to convey material for building a second fort, on the right of the terminus, and two hundred labourers had been brought—which meant that the garrison was to be increased. There is also a considerable railway workshop, and a depot, where presumably rails, &c., are kept in readiness for a hasty prolongation of the line—precisely as is the case at our own terminus on the Indian frontier. I read, by the way, in a recent work, that the relations of the Russians and the Afghans are very friendly. The contrary is the case. Russians described the Afghans to me as "very dangerous," and told me that it had happened more than once that Russian officers out shooting had accidentally crossed the boundary and been pursued by armed Afghans. The Afghan posts let nobody pass, and no trade, and there is no custom-house of any kind.

Altogether, this particular Russian outpost of Empire must be about as disagreeable a place of exile as can be imagined—which is precisely what officers who have been stationed there say about it. Of course, I did not myself see any of the things I have mentioned, but they were matters of common conversation with my acquaintances in the train.

Most interesting of all, however, as one stands here on the edge of the platform and looks down the few hundred yards of this mysterious Merv-Kushk line visible in the dark, is to reflect that if the future brings war between England and Russia its roaring tide will flow over these very rails for the invasion of India, and that if it brings peace this will be a station on the through line between Calais and Kandahar. Some day surely, though it may be long, long hence, and only when tens of thousands of Russian and British soldier-ghosts are wandering through the shades of Walhalla, the traveller from London will hear on this very platform the cry, "Change here for Calcutta!"

For some time after Merv the train passes through this world-famed oasis, then for more than fifty miles it traverses the heart-breaking desert of sand. Central Asia, in fact, as one views it from the train, is a desert broken by oases. Where a river descends from the mountains on the south, and is caught and measured and allotted and distributed till it sometimes disappears altogether in the sands, there is fertility—luxurious vegetations and enormous crops, such fertility, indeed, as hardly exists elsewhere. The moment the irrigated area is passed, the burnt desert begins again, where nothing grows but stunted tamarisk and the prickly camel's thorn—indeed, for hour after hour one often sees not even these poor struggles after plant life. Here, on either side, as far as the eye reaches, is a yellow plain of ribbed sand. The earth has surely nothing more dreary to show, and it is dangerous, too, for the wind blows it up and over the track,

and at the best, companies of men must sweep it away, while at the worst it chokes the locomotive and brings the train to a standstill. Sometimes the whole service of the railway is suspended by such a wind. The only help is found in the saxaul, a stunted, gnarled bush whose twisted roots bind the sand together as osiers bind mud. This being so, I was astonished

A MYSTERY IN TRANS-CASPIA—TURKOMANS EXAMINING THE TRAIN

to see that the fuel in the stoves of the train was heaps of tangled saxaul roots and branches.

By-and-by vegetation begins again—timidly at first, but soon luxuriously, for we are on the edge of the most wonderful river in the world, not excepting the Nile. At the station which now bears the name of the river, Amu Darya, but used to be called Charjui, one hundred and fifty miles beyond Merv, we halt for twenty-five minutes, and then creep forward at a snail's pace. At first by close-packed mud-houses, deep in tropical vegetation, then out upon a wooden bridge over long mud flats, then, barely moving at all, over the Amu Darya—the mighty and immortal

Oxus itself. The bridge is a narrow, low way, upon trestles and piles, but it is one of the engineering wonders of the world, for it is a mile and three-quarters long, the river runs fast over its deep mud, and every balk of timber—there are 3300 piles in the river-bed alone—had to be brought from Russia down the Volga and then transported these seven hundred miles by rail. It is as dry as tinder, for rain is almost unknown here. Every quarter of a mile there is a fire station, with a great cistern of water and buckets, over which stands a sentry with fixed bayonet. Fire is the nightmare of the guardians of the bridge, but though I am not of a nervous temperament I must confess I was much more afraid of water—the dashing, swirling, coffee-coloured water below, between us and which was such a narrow, slender support of twelve-years old wood, every single timber creaking against its neighbour in a sickening fashion. Without exaggeration, I should not have been surprised if the whole thing had collapsed in an instant, and I was glad to see the solid ground underneath once more. The authorities seem to share this fear, for our speed was the slowest at which the engine could move at all. And, in spite of the great cost and the emptiness of the Russian official pocket just now, they are working with utmost speed upon a new bridge a quarter of a mile to the north. A number of huge iron cylindrical piers are in place, a dozen engines are puffing, huge heaps of dressed stones and timbers lie about, and an army of men is at work.

I saw this scene for the first time at sunrise, and I count that among the most impressive moments of my life. These waters rise mysteriously in the "Roof of the World"; for 1500 miles they roll through the land which has been the scene of the most marvellous human episodes; they were looked upon by the first of mankind, for the cradle of our race was there, and they have qualified the schemes of many of the greatest; the legions of Alexander and Genghiz Khan and Tamerlane drank at them; we hear of them at the beginning of Genesis, and they may well yet

be one of the pathways of the last great war of human history. The railway jars sadly upon one's thoughts of such a scene. One feels vulgar to pass through the heart of Asia, the mother of peoples, to the accompaniment of the restaurant-car and the conductor's whistle. The Turkoman, silent in his dignity, wrapped in reserve as in his flowing garments, looking upon the invading stranger and his iron modernities with inscrutable eyes—it is with him, and like him, that one would wish to journey here, and learn and wonder. Most welcome, therefore, comes the recollection of Matthew Arnold's noble lines upon these immemorial waters:

> But the majestic river floated on,
> Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
> Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
> Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,
> Under the solitary moon;—he flow'd
> Right for the polar star, past Orgunje,*
> Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands begin
> To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
> And split his currents; that for many a league
> The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
> Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
> Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
> In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
> A foil'd circuitous wanderer—till at last
> The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
> His luminous home of waters opens, bright
> And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
> Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.†

By breakfast time we are running amid houses and fields and trees, with dignified Bokharans on horseback everywhere in sight. And now the great names of Asia follow fast. Seventy miles beyond the Oxus, and seven hundred and eighty altogether, bring us to Bokhara. A neat, stone-built station like Merv, but larger, a long row of droschkies outside, and a little town of new white houses—that is all the passing traveller sees. The old Bokhara,

* Khiva. † "Sohrab and Rustum."

"the noble," the seat of the learning of Asia nearly a thousand years ago, and always the home of its most savage bigotry, the city with a connected history of more than twelve hundred years, is eight miles away in the fertile land, while the station itself is in the desert. When they brought the railway the Russians were still afraid of the fanatical Bokharans; now they wish they had run their line past the very gates of the city. On the platform a native barber is rapidly shaving heads with a huge hatchet-shaped razor. A woman completely hidden in a dark blue garment sits with her face to the wall, while her husband arranges cushions and washes grapes, and then they proceed to a breakfast of fruit and flapjacks. The Turkoman head-dress of shaggy sheepskin has wholly disappeared, and in place of it there are big burly Bokharans in enormous white turbans and *khalats* of flowered and striped cotton over their tunics, their feet in elegant green-heeled morocco boots, and these tucked into a couple of pairs of slippers, one over the other. They crowd into the train the moment it stops, mostly into the second class (remember there is no first class), and make themselves very much at home. All their belongings come in with them, packed—including, in every case, a long-necked copper water-bottle—in a pair of carpet saddle-bags slung oveir their shoulder. The native passengers leave the train, and, squatting down a few yards beyond the track, perform their ceremonial ablutions and pray toward Mecca. Then they go over to the melon-sellers and return with an enormous water-melon to make a pickaninny gape with envy, and this they proceed to eat in the carriage. These people have never been crushed like the Turkomans; their independence is still nominally preserved to them, for their own Amir can have their throats cut in the bazaar at his pleasure, and their looks and actions are therefore those of free men. They behave, in fact, as if the train belonged to them, and the unfortunate foreigner is crushed in his corner—if he has been lucky enough to keep a corner—by mere weight of humanity.

The flocks of sheep and goats are the most striking feature of the landscape as we proceed, and among the latter are huge billy-goats, as big as a pony and twice as thick, with horns a yard long tossing over them. Then come the first really cultivated fields we have seen, surrounded by low mud walls, some under water and all cleverly irrigated, with winter rice or corn just coming up. After a while the water-supply stops—not a blade can be grown in this country without irrigation, therefore the water-supply is subject to the most rigorous supervision and scrupulous distribution, what Matthew Arnold calls "the shorn and parcell'd Oxus," in a line as remarkable for its exact accuracy as for its perfect music—the desert regains its sway, and for hours we pass over an absolutely flat plain, unbroken at an horizon, without a living thing upon it but tufts of coarse grass a few inches high. Then gradually signs of the neighbourhood of a river reappear, willows and alders and big trees like maples, irrigation channels, planted fields, winter crops just green above the surface. Ruined strongholds, similar to those one sees in the Balkans, where a whole village had to be ready to run for safety against Turkish marauders, tell their own tale of the rich life hereabouts and the state of society in years long past. Some of these little castles are now inhabited by villagers, and some are in almost perfect preservation, walls, gates, towers, crenelated battlements and all. At half-past seven, nine hours after leaving Bokhara, and 934 miles from the Caspian, the train stops, and opposite my window is the magic name "Samarkand," redolent of the East and its roses, the city which Tamerlane made the Asiatic Athens, alike for the renown of its learning and the magnificence of its monuments. A glimpse of a wooden town in a park of verdure, a twenty minutes' halt, a capital meal in the restaurant, and we are off again. Of course, I lingered in these famous cities on my return—now I go straight through. Five hours later we are at the junction of Chernayevo, where the line divides, one branch going northward to Tashkent, the

other continuing eastward to Andijan, in the heart of the cotton country. At last, sixty-six hours and 1153 miles from Krasnovodsk, the train stops for good, in the heart of Asia, at the large, handsome station of Tashkent, the administrative centre of Turkestan and the residence of the Governor-General of the whole Trans-Caspian region.

The following condensed time-table will show the reader this journey—the most remarkable train-journey in the world—at a glance :

MILES.	STATION.	HOUR OF ARRIVAL.
——	Krasnovodsk	(departure) 3.00 P.M.
208	Kizil-Arvat	2.36 A.M.
343	Askhabad	9.45 A.M.
556	Merv	9.10 P.M.
574	Bairam-Ali	10.25 P.M.
706	Amu-Darya (Charjui)	5.07 A.M.
780	Bokhara	10.04 A.M.
886	Katti-Kurgan	4.40 P.M.
934	Samarkand	7.30 P.M.
1005	Jisak	11.40 P.M.
1059	Chernayevo	2.55 A.M.
1153	Tashkent.	8.40 A.M.
1059	Chernayevo	(departure) 4.00 A.M.
1108	Khodjent.	6.45 A.M.
1177	Kokand	10.55 A.M.
1226	Margelan	2.19 P.M.
1261	Andijan	5.15 P.M.

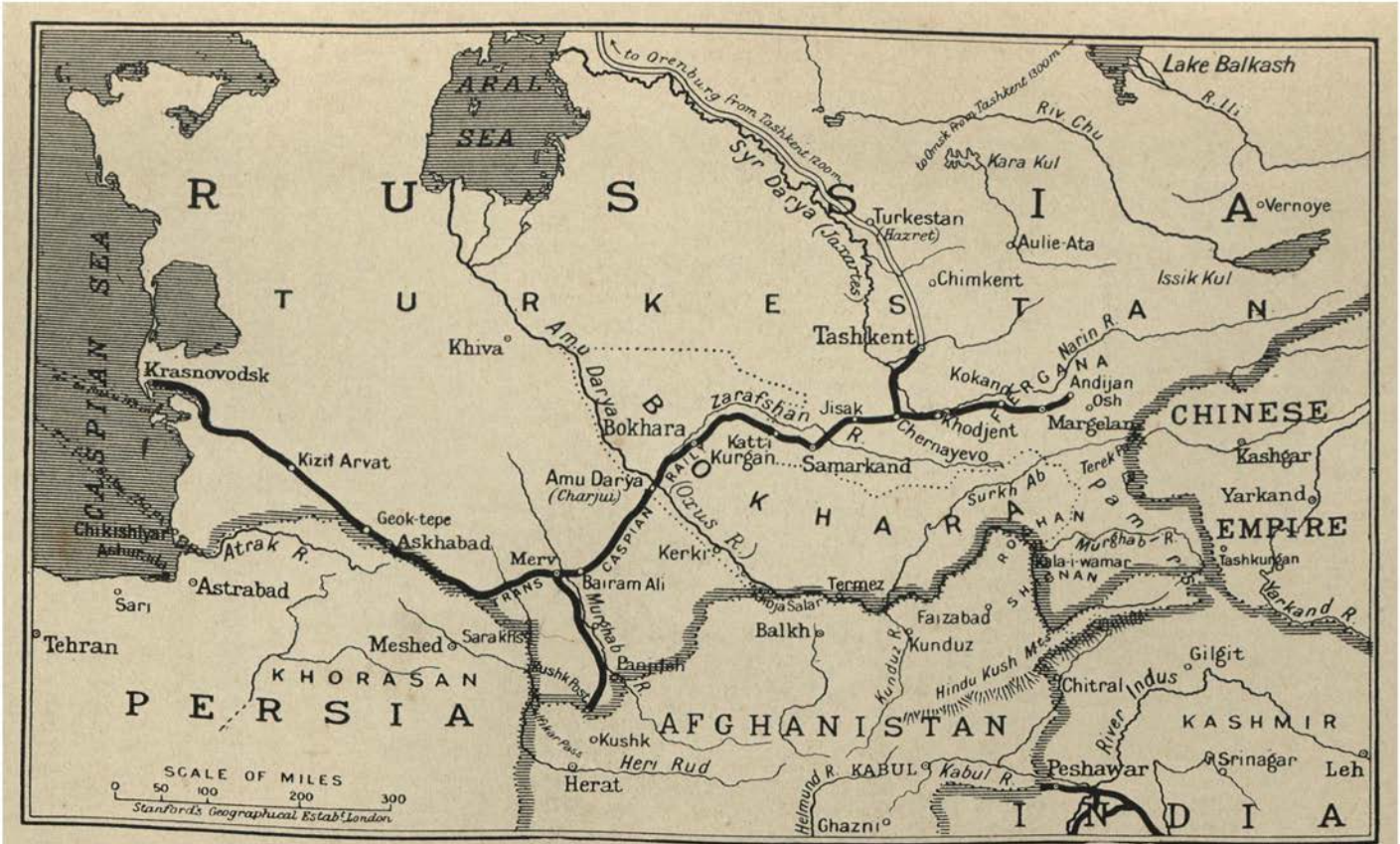
The principal stations are thus sixteen, but the total number of stations is ninety-six—seventy-seven to the junction of Chernayevo, five to Tashkent on the northern branch, and fourteen to Andijan on the eastern branch. The total length of the railway, including both branches, is 2053 versts—1355 miles—and the average speed, from Krasnovodsk, the starting-point on the Caspian, to Tashkent, the northern terminus, including all stoppages, is seventeen and one-half miles an hour. But ex-

cluding the eight scheduled stops, amounting to two hours and twenty-five minutes, and allowing three minutes at each of the other stations, the actual average speed while running works out at over twenty miles an hour—a highly creditable performance and much superior to that of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

Merely as a railway the Trans-Caspian is in no way extraordinary. Except for the absence of labour, timber, and water, which necessitated a rolling camp following upon the heels of

BREAD-SELLERS AT A STATION

the working party, and the passage of the sand desert, it presented no difficulties, and the only engineering exploit is the bridge over the Oxus. But, as I said at the beginning, the astounding fact is that it is here at all. It was begun on June 30, 1885; Merv was reached in July 1886; the Amu-Darya in June 1887; the bridge, 4600 yards long, was opened for traffic in January 1888; Samarkand reached in May 1888; and Tashkent soon afterward. Thus twenty years ago it was not thought of as it exists to-day; the notion of it was even strenuously repudiated by Russian statesmen when England grew nervous about



THE TRANS-CASPIAN RAILWAY

their intentions. Twenty-five years ago Samarkand and Tashkent were only to be reached by adventurous travellers carrying their lives in their hands; Bokhara was as dangerous and as inaccessible as the capital of Thibet is to-day; Andijan was unheard of; England would not have tolerated for a moment the idea of the absorption of all Central Asia by Russia. Now Russia has it all—for ever, beyond the possibility of internal revolt or external attack; you "book" to Kokand as easily as to Kent or Kentucky; you are as safe there as in Calcutta or Colorado; the railway has brought Russian troops once more close to the frontier of China, and actually to the frontier of Afghanistan; most wonderful of all, this line, planned and carried out as a purely military work, is already paying its way handsomely, and has been transferred from military to civil administrators. And it has brought peace and commerce and civilisation, as Russia understands the word, to a vast region where so few years ago utter barbarism reigned. The military advantages it confers are too great and too conspicuous to call for mention. It is a daring enterprise, magnificently executed. Physical difficulties and diplomatic obstacles have been alike overcome or disregarded. Moreover, it is but the beginning of what is to be in this part of the world. No thoughtful foreigner can make the journey without conceiving a profound admiration of Russia's courage and a profound respect for her powers. Russians have every right to be proud of their Trans-Caspian conquest and its symbol, the railway; for the rest of the world it is half a dozen object-lessons in one.

CHAPTER XVII

RUSSIAN EXPANSION IN CENTRAL ASIA

THE railway which Russia has pushed forward through the region of tropic heat has worked a revolution not less than that which she has thrust across the region of Arctic cold. Indeed the Trans-Caspian Railway has accomplished more than the Trans-Siberian, for whereas the remotest districts of Siberia have been accessible for generations to anybody who had time and endurance enough to undertake a journey of many weeks in tarantass or sleigh, Central Asia a few years ago was hermetically sealed except to the courageous few who, knowing the languages, were prepared to penetrate it in disguise, at the risk of torture and death, beyond the reach of any possible succour or rescue in case of mishap. Moreover, in Siberia, there was always river transport in summer, slow, but cheap and safe ; in Central Asia the camel was the only carrier. Therefore the Trans-Caspian Railway was destined by nature to have a revolutionary effect, and this has been even more than was foreseen. Not to burden these pages with figures, I may say that in 1885, two years before the railway reached Samarkand, the total imports and exports of the province of Turkestan amounted to 40,475 tons, while in 1896, after the railway had been in operation eight years, they had risen to 159,229 tons, and the increase is proceeding rapidly and steadily. In 1897, the district of Andijan alone exported 19,000 tons of cotton, and along the eastern portion of the line I saw acres and acres of bales awaiting shipment, while everywhere I heard complaints of the insufficiency of rolling stock to meet the demands of growers. Yet the line itself is laid as in Russia, except for the first hundred miles,

where the rails are the old light ones originally laid to Uzun-Ada; the roadway is solidly ballasted; and the speed, as I have shown, is good. The income from freight and passengers is not yet enough, of course, to pay interest on the whole capital expenditure, but it more than pays all working expenses, and for the rest Russia has the enormous strategical advantages it gives her, and the certainty that the pecuniary returns will be greater every year. The gross receipts for 1899 were £590—say $3000—per mile, and the total movement of freight 376,000 tons.

Russia is not satisfied, however, with the brilliant results she has achieved—British trade, once so flourishing, driven from Central Asia; a great domestic trade created; Trans-Caspia, Bokhara, Turkestan closely connected with European Russia; a railway station placed upon the Afghan frontier; and the rich province of Khorassan as good as annexed. As usual, it is a supposed strategic necessity that is urging her on. At present, in the eyes of her strategists, the Trans-Caspian is an isolated railway. It depends upon the military district of the Caucasus alone. If a Russian army is ever required in Central Asia—a possibility which every Russian strategist feels compelled to contemplate—it will be a great one, it will demand vast quantities of supplies behind it, and both men and *matériel* will be wanted quickly. Taking Moscow or Warsaw as the military centre of Russia, this movement would have to take place, as things are now, by the rail route of Rostof, Vladikavkaz, Petrofsk, Baku, thence across the Caspian, and another seven or eight hundred miles to where the troops were wanted—a long and costly journey, and without sufficient steamer accommodation on the Caspian Sea. By rail to Samara or Saratof, and thence down the Volga and across the Caspian to Baku, would be even longer in point of time. Why does Russia think her troops must be more quickly moved than either of these two routes would allow? She knows that she has no invasion from India to fear, and that, whether her forces were

gathered quickly or slowly, they would find the same military concentration awaiting them on the Indian frontier or in Afghanistan.

The explanation is simple, and has recently been put forward in an almost semi-official manner in Russia.* It is an absolutely determined part of her policy to have an outlet on the Persian Gulf—to carry her south-western frontier to the warm water.† With her present railway system, however, she does not feel strong enough to meet the opposition that this step—practically the annexation of Persia—might provoke. The definite project

* See "The Shortest Railway Route from Central Europe to Central Asia" (St. Petersburg, 1899) and R. E. C. Long, "Russian Railway Policy in Asia," *Fortnightly Review*, December 1899.

† It may be remarked that Russian writers have been for some time urging upon the Russian Government the necessity of pushing a railway to the Indian Ocean without delay. For instance, Professor Hermann Brunnhofer, of St. Petersburg, in a volume of essays called "Russia's Hand over Asia," published three years ago, advocated the seizure of the little Persian seaport of Bender Jesseh, near Ormuz, as an offset to the expected British occupation of Bender Abbas. He wrote:

"Bender Jesseh is, so to speak, the Russian Vladivostok on the Indian Ocean. If Western Siberia and Central Asia are not to be excluded from the great trade of the world in future, they must endeavour to come into direct communication with the Indian Ocean. Gigantic as the advantages are which the Siberian Railway will confer on the Russian Empire, it will in the future not be able to meet the still more gigantic demands which will be made upon it by international traffic, the produce of Russo-Siberian and Chinese soil, the industries, and the civil and military administrations. A second Pacific railway through Siberia, analogous to the three Pacific railways running through North America, is absolutely impossible. If Russia, therefore, wishes to, and will, safeguard the future, the centre of her Empire—viz. Western Siberia and Central Asia—she must, in the first instance, keep open the access to the Indian Ocean. The railway to Bender Jesseh will probably start from Askhabad, south-east, *viâ* Kotchan, to Meshed and Herat; then curve westward to Birjand, cross the terrible Lut Desert, and reach Kerman. From here it will run to Bender Jesseh, after overcoming considerable difficulties. The harbour of this commercial town is good, and only open to south-east winds. The anchorage is five metres deep at one and one-half kilometres distance from the shore, and eight metres deep at three kilometres distance. Bender Jesseh is connected by a regular weekly steamship service with Kurachi and Bombay on the east, and with Bushire and Busra on the west."

This railway, he added, would have its greatest value in rendering Russia "entirely independent of the Dardanelles and the Suez Canal." And in this connection it is a curious fact that Suez Canal shares fell when the concession for the Baghdad railway was announced.

of such a railway would (unless a preliminary agreement had been reached), precipitate hostile action by England; it would in all probability cause a Mohammedan rising; like the Trans-Caspian, the railway would be isolated from Europe, and moreover it would be open to military attack from Egypt and India. Most important consideration of all, Germany stands possessed *de jure* of the right of which Russia is hurrying to become possessed *de facto*, namely, to build a railway connecting the present European system with the Persian Gulf. Russia's fear is intense, therefore, that Germany, or England and Germany in co-operation, will create direct transit between Europe and India, and will do this before she herself is in a position either to prevent it or to offer an alternative. For the Russian view is that the trade of the world is insufficient to support two railway connections between Europe and India, and that therefore whenever one such connection is made, any other becomes impossible. And this connection Russia has always been determined to have for herself. The answer to the above question, therefore, is this: Russia is extremely anxious to extend her railway system in Central Asia, (1) to bring her military centres into direct connection with the Afghan and Persian frontiers, in view of possible hostilities with England; (2) to secure for herself the future railway trade-route between Europe and India, by offering a shorter and cheaper line before the alternative route *viâ* Baghdad is constructed; (3) by thus rendering the construction of this latter railway an unprofitable undertaking, to remove the one fatal obstacle to an ultimate port for herself upon the Persian Gulf; (4) to develop further her own Central Asian territories. From a Russian point of view the reasons are certainly convincing.

The German project is so important, in itself, as affecting the future of Russia in Central Asia, and as possibly compromising gravely the relations between the two Empires, that all students of foreign affairs are watching its development with great attention, and I may pause a moment here to give a brief account of it.

From the time of the Armenian massacres, when Germany so conspicuously declined to join in any coercive measures, the relations of the Kaiser and the Sultan have grown steadily more intimate, as exhibited during the war with Greece, and in the former's triumphal visits to Constantinople and Jerusalem. The climax—assuredly foreseen and planned—came in the signature, in December 1899, of the concession to a German company of the right to build a railway across Asia Minor to Baghdad, with an obvious ultimate terminus in the great harbour of Koweit, at the head of the Persian Gulf. The Russian Ambassador had moved heaven and earth to prevent this concession being given to Germany, and a British syndicate had even offered to construct the line without any State guarantee at all. But so powerful was the combination of Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, the German Ambassador in Constantinople, and Dr. von Siemens, the director of the Deutsche Bank, that they not only obtained the concession but also in it an undertaking from the Turkish Government to pay to the Company a kilometrical guarantee or subsidy of £1000 per mile per annum—that is, a yearly payment in all of £240,000—$1,200,000! This is the most striking diplomatic success of modern times, and the rebuff to Russia is, of course, proportionate to the triumph of Germany. I say nothing of the rebuff to England; the conduct of our foreign affairs of late has accustomed us to rebuffs. But it is worthy of remark that the final struggle for this great concession was taking place in Constantinople at the precise time when the Kaiser was in England and when the first startling disaster of the Boer War had just occurred.

The proposed railway is an extension of the line rapidly built and well worked by Germany, from Haidar-Pasha, on the Bosphorus (where a German company has just been formed, with the Sultan's approval, to develop a harbour), *viâ* Ismid, Eskishehr, and Afiun kara-hissar, to Konia. The new line will proceed southward to Kerman, at the foot of the Taurus Mountains, then

skirt this range north-eastward to Eregli, cross it by the famous pass to Aḍana (whence there is already a short English line to the Mediterranean), and proceed to Tell-ha-besh (with a branch to Aleppo), bridging the Euphrates at Eüropus, and *viâ* Mosul (near Nineveh), Tekrit, and Beled (with a branch to Khannikin, on the Persian frontier, whence a line might profitably be run *viâ* Kermanshahan, Aamadan, and Kum, to Tehran) to Baghdad. Thence the line will continue *viâ* Kerbela, Nedjef, and Busra, to Kozima, at the head of the magnificent harbour of Koweit, where there is to be a German naval coaling-station—four days' steam from Bombay! To bring this railway into connection with European lines the Bosphorus is to be spanned by a bridge gratefully named after the present Sultan, and a recent well-informed anonymous writer calculates that Kozima will be reached in three and a half days from Constantinople, and ten days from Berlin. The length of the new railway will be 1750 miles, and according to the concession it is to be finished by 1907. But although the concession was signed two years ago, the first shovelful of earth has yet to be lifted—and for the very good reason that Turkey is utterly unable to pay the guarantee she has promised unless she is permitted by the Powers to increase her import duties from eight to eleven per cent., which, backed of course by Germany, she is now desirous of doing. But England has the preponderant share of Turkish trade, and therefore for her to consent to burden her trade in order that Germany may build a railway to rob her of an important trade-route is, as has been said, like asking her to contribute to the cost of the razor for cutting her own throat.

The harbour of Koweit has just enjoyed a period of considerable diplomatic and naval prominence, unquestionably in connection with the development of the German scheme. In January 1900 it was visited by a German mission, accompanied by the German Consul-General in Constantinople, and several engineers, including the chief engineer of the Baghdad Rail-

way. This mission requested the Sheikh of Koweit, Mubarek el Sabbah, *in the name of the Sultan of Turkey*, to cede to Germany the village of Kadne, on the northern shore of the Koweit inlet. The Sheikh declined to do so. Next, a Turkish force of 3000 men was collected at Busra, where Izzet Bey, said to be one of the Sultan's chief advisers upon Arabian affairs, had been spending several months, and in August last the Turkish corvette *Sehab* arrived at Koweit with some of this force on board, to occupy the place—a previous attempt to smash Mubarek through his enemy Ibn el Rashid, Emir of Nejd, having failed. But when the *Sehab* reached Koweit she found a British gunboat already there, the commander of which prohibited her from landing troops, and a British naval force was promptly concentrated in the Gulf. In view of the relations of Turkey and Germany one need not be unduly suspicious to suppose that if the Sultan had succeeded in occupying Koweit, its cession to Germany would have been the next step. Those who have a taste for such things will greatly enjoy the following comment of the *Kölnische Zeitung* upon the incident :

"In the political sphere the Koweit question threatens to assume a certain importance. It is naturally not in the interest of Turkey, nor in that of those who will build and work the railway, that the terminus, the excellent harbour of Koweit, on the shores of which Kozima lies, should be alienated from the immediate sovereignty of Turkey. The 'Salnameh,' the Turkish statistical annual, regularly registers Koweit as 'Kaasa' and its Sheikh as a Kaimakam. This clearly shows that Koweit is accounted Turkish territory, although the exercise of sovereign rights had been ceded to the Sheikh for the time being. The question of the form in which the State should exercise its sovereignty may best be left to itself. The fact that Koweit belongs to Turkey cannot be impugned, and English atlases have till now exhibited no dubiety on this point.

RAILWAY EXPANSION IN CENTRAL ASIA.

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It must be regarded as highly improbable that England means to alter this situation by violent means, and it is equally improbable that the Sultan of his own accord will divest himself of rights which are of great importance for Turkey and for the working of the contemplated great railway. In an epoch which has given birth to Pan-Islamism, a movement with many promising aspects, the renunciation of the sovereignty of the Sultan over Mahomedan territory in Asia would be a step which would be entirely inconsistent."

A blind man could read between the lines of this inspired utterance. The spectacle of Christian Germany invoking Pan-Islamism on behalf of her own political and commercial ambitions is both instructive and entertaining.*

What is this railway to accomplish ? "The German calculation is, of course," says the anonymous writer I have already quoted, "not only that new trade will be developed, but that the course of present trade will be altered. It is expected that British vessels will cease to be the chief medium between Central Europe and the East. Passenger traffic with India is to be almost absorbed by the Baghdad Railway, reached from London and Paris *viâ* Munich and Vienna." But far more than this, Asia Minor is to serve for the overflow population of the Fatherland; its grain is to render Germany independent of the United States and Russia; Mesopotamia, irrigated anew, is to overflow with agricultural wealth; tobacco, silk, oil, petroleum, are to be produced lavishly; and a German fleet, at a naval base four days from Bombay, with a railway to Germany behind it, is to alter the balance of power in Asia. All discussion of these developments is stifled in Germany at present, but a glance at

* A second incident of a similar kind has since (December 1901) happened at Koweit. A Turkish official from Busra visited Koweit and hoisted the Turkish flag there, whereupon the commander of a British gunboat hauled it down and hoisted Mubarek's own flag. The Porte has repudiated its official's action and assured England that it has no desire to disturb the *status quo*. The French and Russian press is angry, but the Russian Government has privately disavowed any aggressive intention in that part of the world.

the map, combined with an elementary knowledge of ancient economic history, is sufficient to show them plainly.

This, then, is the very serious rivalry which Russia has now to face in her cherished policy. It is not surprising that she is genuinely alarmed. Two years ago (November 1899) the *Russki Trud*, a well-informed weekly, since suppressed, prophetically remarked: "We have repeatedly urged that before great interests have been developed in Persia the whole of this country must somehow or other be drawn into the sphere of Russian influence. What we can now attain without any sacrifices on our side, later on, when the auspicious moment will have passed, would require immense efforts in a struggle with Germany, which has for a long time past been aiming at the Persian Gulf." A month later, when the Turkish concession to Germany was known, the *Novoye Vremya* expatiated with alarm upon the "terrible blow" which Germany would be able to deal to Russian trade, and upon the prospect of Russia having to fight in Persia "not only against the British, but against a whole coalition of Western Commercial adventurers," while the *Sviet* saw Russia face to face not with the Triple but with a Quadruple and even a Quintuple Alliance, formed by the adhesion of Great Britain and Turkey to Germany, Austria, and Italy. Now the *Novoye Vremya* announces frankly that "before the German Baghdad Railway has become an accomplished fact, Russia's railway projects in Persia will have been advanced to an important stage," and in its alarm even holds out a surprising olive-branch to England:

"We cannot conceal from ourselves the fact that the Near Orient is of immense importance to us. It is absolutely indispensable to the final accomplishment of an historical task imposed by Providence upon Russia. As England is perfectly well aware of this, she has swayed hither and thither, *pro* and *con*, in her dealings with Germany with regard to the latter's Baghdad Railway scheme. . . . Had England conferred one-

half the favours upon this country which she has heaped upon her wily and ungrateful German neighbour, there would to-day exist a cordial and durable Anglo-Russian *entente*, if not, indeed, a complete and lasting Alliance.*

I have already described briefly what Russia is doing in the matter of railway expansion towards the Persian frontier, and what her further intentions are believed to be.†

In 1898 Count Vladimir Kapnist, cousin of the then Russian Ambassador in Vienna, applied on behalf of an international syndicate for a concession to construct a railway from Tripoli to Koweit, uniting the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf, with the double object of developing the marvellously rich country traversed by the Euphrates and the Tigris, and of reducing the journey from Brindisi to Bombay from thirteen days to eight.‡ In spite of very influential support, however, the scheme fell through. The claim that such a railway would have added enormously to the wealth of the world appears to be well founded,

* Under the circumstances this overture may be read with a smile in England, but for my own part I believe the assertion in the last paragraph (omitting the adjectives applied to Germany) to be unquestionably true.

† See Chapter XIV., and also Chapter XXIV.

‡ The following was the exact route laid down by the engineers to the syndicate. From Tripoli the line would follow the sea-coast as far as the Nahr-el-Kebir, and then up the course of that river over the lowest and easiest pass which could be found through the chain of mountains running parallel to the Syrian coast. The line would reach a summit level of about 2000 feet above the sea between Tripoli and Homs, on a plateau of hard black basalt. Thence it would proceed to Homs, which is about 1500 feet above the sea, and on through Palmyra, past numerous villages, to Rahaba, on the Euphrates, following, in the main, the present caravan route. The railway would go down the valley of the Euphrates as far as El Kaim, then over the plains to Hit, where it would cross the river and proceed to Iskanderieh, the junction for Baghdad and for Khannikin (on the Persian frontier), and to Kerbela and Nedjef, the famous shrines and burial-places of the Persian Mahomedans, on the south; thence, in as nearly a straight line as possible, across the great alluvial plain between the two rivers to Kurna, where it would again cross the Euphrates and be continued to Busra, and thence across country to Koweit, on the Persian Gulf.—*The Times*, December 17, 1898. Another application for a similar railway concession, this time from Alexandretta to Aleppo and thence to Hit and onward, is said (*Daily Mail*, April 27, 1899) to have been unsuccessfully made by Mr. Ernest Rechnitzer, a Hungarian banker resident in London, backed by English, German, and Belgian capital.

but as it would not have strengthened Germany or Russia to the exclusion of other nations it was doubtless wrecked by the opposition, or failed to succeed for lack of the official support, of one or both of these Powers. Russia has never turned aside from her "historical task," however. Her agents have worked with complete success in the Persian capital; a good road has been built by a group of Moscow merchants, heavily backed by Imperial subsidies, from Resht, on the Caspian, to Tehran; the Shah's "Cossacks" are commanded by Russian officers and have recently been increased in number to 2000; and parties of her surveyors have examined the railway routes to the Gulf. That her present aim is the incorporation of Persia in the Russian Empire admits of no doubt whatever; indeed it was recently openly avowed by the Chief Officer, a personage of princely rank, of the Grand Duke Alexander Michaelovitch, of the battleship *Rostislav*, at a banquet in Odessa, who declared it to be just as certain that Persia would become Russian as that Manchuria had already done so.*

All accounts, official and private, agree that Russia has been extremely active in Persia of late, and she has twice despatched to the Gulf ports a steamship named the *Kornilov*, carrying Russian goods with which to open trade relations, and an investigating commission of twenty merchants, and is also stated to have sent a lighter draught vessel, the *Azov*, to enable her admiralty hydrographers to take soundings of important points. Her newspapers declare that her forward policy in Persia is due to the British preparations for a railway from Quetta to Siestan, and ultimately to Busra—"another base from which she may attack us in Central Asia"!—but, as a matter of plain fact, no direct evidence of Russian aims in this direction need be adduced. Her determination to construct such a railway as is here described follows naturally and logically from her political, geographical, and commercial conditions, and would

* See *The Standard*, July 22, 1901.

similarly follow in the case of any other nation so situated. It would be of such enormous value to her, from every point of view, that her statesmen would be poor in patriotism indeed if they did not make every conceivable effort to secure it.* Other nations, however, may be equally interested to prevent it, but this aspect of the situation is apart from the matter in hand, and I shall return to it later, in connection with the political relations of Russia with her neighbours, great and small.†

This somewhat lengthy digression has been intended to show what reasons Russia has, or thinks she has, for linking her European railway system without delay to her Trans-Caspian Railway. I return now to Central Asia, with the reflection, to begin with, that the position of this link must chiefly depend upon its immediate object. For one of two practical considerations would be decisive: the route would be selected either for its strategical value and to form ultimately the connection with India, or else primarily for the development of new territory. If the former, then the shortest and most direct route would undoubtedly have been from Saratof, on the Volga, to the little town of Alexandrof-gai, one hundred and forty miles to the south-east (the two are already connected by a narrow-gauge railway), bending round the north of the Caspian and the south of the Aral Sea, and running straight by Khiva to the station of Amu-Darya (Charjui) on the main line of the Trans-Caspian Railway. This railway would have the disadvantage of passing through comparatively poor territory, but it would be almost a straight line from Moscow to Amu-Darya, and, *viâ* Merv and Kushk Post, would place the head-quarters of the Russian army within literally a few days of its

* "That Russia seriously contemplates such an adventure I do not for a moment believe." Sir LEPEL GRIFFIN, quoted by Mr. P. H. Oakley Williams, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, February 19, 1900.

† See Chapter XXIV.

military objective, whether this were Afghanistan, Persia, or Chinese Turkestan. The distance from Alexandrof-gai to Amu-Darya station would be 1128 miles, and the cost of laying this line, which would meet with no engineering difficulty of any importance, is estimated at £9,500,000—$46,300,000—including an iron bridge over the Volga at Saratof, and the widening of the line from Saratof to Alexandrof-gai. When it was completed, the distance from Moscow to Merv, which latter we may take as a central point of concentration, would be 1980 miles, and at an average speed of twenty miles an hour, Merv would be just four days distant from Moscow, and in less than another day the Afghan frontier would be reached at Kushk Post. If strategical and rapid-transit interests were adjudged paramount, this seems obviously the line which should have been constructed.

Russian statesmen have been led by considerations of direct and strategical transit rather than by commercial and agricultural potentialities, but they have not chosen this route. For reasons difficult to understand they have decided upon a railway from Orenburg to Tashkent. The *Russki Invalid*, which has just published an account of it, admits that it will traverse a large tract of sparsely populated and barren land. After leaving Orenburg it will pass through Ilentsk and Aktiubinsk and strike the Syr Darya at Kazalinsk. It will then follow the course of the river to Tashkent, passing on the way the fort of Karmakchi, the town of Petrofsk, and the village of Julek. It will be a single line and have a length of about 1150 miles. The building of the railway is already in full swing; on the northern part, from Orenburg to Kazalinsk, the earthworks and the building of bridges are almost finished, and the laying of the rails will be commenced next spring; in the southern part the work is not so far advanced, but preparations are being made and materials collected. It is expected that the railway will be opened on January 1 (14th), 1905, and it will then be possible to run

trains from St. Petersburg and Moscow to Tashkent and the whole Trans-Caspian line. The estimated cost of the railway is 115 million roubles—£12,150,000, $58,175,000. When completed, the journey will be: Moscow to Samara, 738 miles; Samara to Orenburg, 260 miles (railway traffic has long existed to this point); Orenburg to Tashkent, 1150 miles; and Tashkent to Merv, by the existing line, 597 miles. Total: 2745 miles, as against the 1980 miles *viâ* Alexandrof-gai.

When I was in Tashkent I was told by the Director of the Topographical Bureau that this decision had been reached, and that the line would shortly be commenced, but after studying the alternative routes I thought that he must be mistaken, and I am still unable to find a reason for the choice that has been made. In each case over a thousand miles of new rails must be laid, no engineering difficulties occur, and the country traversed is almost worthless for agricultural or commercial development. The one important difference is that by the Orenburg-Tashkent route the military centre of Russia in Europe is some seven hundred miles farther from the military focus of Russia in Central Asia.

The chief export of Central Asia to Russia is, and will be in a still greater degree, cotton. At present this goes to the mills of Moscow by the Trans-Caspian Railway, the Caspian Sea, and the Volga in summer, and the Russian railway system instead of the Volga in winter, the former rate being 1.08 rouble and the latter 1.30 rouble per poud. From the centre of the cotton districts of Fergana to Moscow is reckoned at 3212 versts, and the freight of cotton at one-thirtieth of a kopeck per poud per verst, which works out at 1.07 rouble per poud*—practically the same cost as by the existing railway and the Volga in summer. Thus only in winter will the line to Orenburg be of service

* The English or American reader who desires to translate these figures into the currency and quantities of his own country can do so by the equivalents given in the Appendix.

to the greatest export of the country, and then only, allowing fully for all the disadvantages of the present route, by reducing the total cost of cotton in Moscow by 3 per cent.*—a trifle, while on the imports of manufactured goods from Russia, costing much more and paying a higher freight than cotton, the percentage of advantage will be considerably less. A branch will doubtless be run from the flourishing little town of Orsk, 152 miles to the south-east of Orenburg, in the centre of a cattle-breeding district, to Chelyabinsk, on the Siberian side of the Urals, the commencement, properly speaking, of the Trans-Siberian Railway. This will bring grain and iron to Trans-Caspia, and thus to some extent afford a commercial justification of the choice of route, but even here I cannot see that the advantage over the present line of transportation will be anything like great enough to lead us to believe that the interests of commerce dictated the choice of the new line.

If commercial and agricultural development were really the paramount consideration, then beyond any question a line connecting Turkestan with Western Siberia would confer the greatest benefit. This would run from Tashkent, *viâ* the town and Russian fort of Aulie-ata, one hundred and fifty-five miles to the north-east; Vernoye, the capital of the province of Semiryechensk, with a population of nearly 25,000; Kopal, one hundred and seventy miles farther on; Sergiopol; Semipalatinsk, capital of the province of that name, on the Irtysh River, with a population of nearly 20,000; and thence to Omsk, the town probably destined to become the most important on the Trans-Siberian Railway. This railway would run, as shown, past large and growing towns, through districts with an industrious and prosperous population of nomads, through a fertile corn-growing country, where the best wheat to-day sells for eight

* For this calculation I am indebted to an essay by Mr. D. Zhoravko-Pokorski, a Russian merchant resident in Central Asia, and to the author himself for interesting information and some statistics given elsewhere.

kopecks the poud (twopence, or four cents, for thirty-six pounds) through a rich cattle-raising steppe, and past known deposits of both coal and gold. Moreover, it would enormously increase the production of cotton in Turkestan, by bringing cheap wheat into that country from Siberia and thus allowing all the land now necessarily given to corn-growing to be devoted to the far more profitable cultivation of cotton.

The reader who has followed this somewhat technical railway discussion will have gathered that Russia has two intertwined aims and motives, that she is driving two politico-economic horses abreast, so to speak. She greatly desires to connect her European railway system with the railways of British India, across Central Asia and Afghanistan. And she desires this for two reasons: first, that she may enjoy the great advantages of the future ownership of the great international railway route to the East; and second, that by depriving any prospective railway to the Persian Gulf of much of its *raison d'être* she may prevent it being built, and thus block the creation of what would undoubtedly be an almost insuperable obstacle to her protectorate over Persia, and her own railway to the Persian Gulf. This policy may be thought to resemble Paul Morphy's announcement of mate in twenty-three moves, but Russian diplomacy is accustomed to look far ahead and to calculate with wide combinations, and when I say above that such is Russia's desire, I mean that I know that the men who chiefly direct her policy have these particular aims in view and very much at heart.

Most readers will by now have formulated an objection somewhat in this shape: it is all very well for Russia to talk about joining her Central Asian railways to the Indian railways, and thus securing a great rapid-transit route from Europe to the richest East, but what about Afghanistan and the Indian Government—

will they, under any circumstances, permit such a junction to be made, and thus prepare an easy road for Russian troops to enter India ? * The question is, of course, of the first importance, and in the present state of feeling on both sides, it can only be answered with some discretion. In the first place, such a junction is absolutely certain to come some day, but the time may be far off. Second, if Russia were successful in a war against England, it would assuredly be one of her conditions of peace. Third, a railway would give little advantage to Russia that it would not give to England, for if it would enable Russia to hurry troops toward India, it would equally enable England to hurry Indian troops toward Central Asia, and the final advantage would thus be, as it always is in war, to the quickest to act. Fourth, it would do much to remove international misunderstanding, for it would bring intelligent and commercial Russians into India, and a similar class of English and Anglo-Indians into Russia. Finally, will not the moment soon come, when two civilised nations will refuse to allow an uncivilised *régime*, friendly at heart to neither and only friendly in action to one of them so long as self-interest dictates such a course,† to stand in the way of one of those great advances of intercommunication, which are the chief signs and promoters of civilisation ? In view of these considerations, it can hardly be thought unreasonable for Russia to plan her Central Asian communications with a view to their ultimate extension to Central India.

If the two nations agreed to join hands across Afghanistan with their respective railway systems as at present existing, the route would be from Merv to Kushkinski Post, thence to New Chaman, the present terminus of the Indian frontier railway, sixty miles north-west of Quetta ; thence to Sukkur and Ruk junction ; and from there either to the Punjab or to Karachi, one of the four

* For the details of the Russian branch railway to the Afghan frontier, see the preceding Chapter, and for the political question of Russia and India, see Chapter XXIV.

† This was written before the death of the late Amir of Afghanistan.

great seaports of India. If Kushkinski Post and New Chaman were connected by railway to-day, a distance of only four hundred and thirty-eight miles, without any new line whatever being constructed by either Russia or India, the distance from London to Karachi by rail (including the short sea passages of the Channel and the Caspian) is calculated by Mr. Paul Lessar as 4716 miles, and the time of the journey as one hundred and seventy-four and one-half hours. The route would be London, Calais, Berlin, Alexandrovo, Warsaw, Rostof, Petrofsk, Baku, Krasnovodsk, Merv, Kushk, Chaman, Karachi. If Kushkinski Post and New Chaman were connected by rail after the Orenburg-Tashkent link is finished, there would be, of course an all-rail route from Calais to Karachi, but it would take considerably more time.

I have written at what may seem undue length about the future of Russian railway construction in Central Asia because it is really the most important and significant question in that part of the world. It is vitally connected with peace and war alike—with commercial development and international rivalry. The reader who takes the trouble to grasp the routes I have mentioned and the arguments for and against each of them, will understand also where the line of next tension lies, and when the first step in advance is made—and it may not long be delayed—he will be in a position to interpret its intention, to perceive its diplomatic significance, and possibly to forecast its military consequences.

CHAPTER XVIII

RUSSIAN ADMINISTRATION IN CENTRAL ASIA: TRANS-CASPIA AND TASHKENT

AS I sat writing my notes in a little whitewashed room in the very heart of Asia, having come by train through Merv, with its branch straight to the Afghan frontier; past the ruined fortress of Geok Tepe, which fought Skobelef for three bloody weeks; past Bokhara, the last home of Central Asian Mussulman fanaticism; by Samarkand, where Genghiz Khan ruled and Tamerlane is buried; to Tashkent, which routed a Russian army thirty-five years ago—as I sat and thought, on the one hand, of this wild, remote, unaltered East, and on the other, that I was as safe as if in my own garden and that I had just come from a brilliant evening party at the Governor-General's, it seemed to me that I must be dreaming. I almost despair of making it all seem real to anybody else, for the position was one "at which," in Dr. Johnson's words, "experience revolts, credulity hesitates, and even fancy stares." However, the attempt must be made, and I begin with the district in which you set foot on landing upon the eastern shore of the Caspian, officially known as the Trans-Caspian Territory.

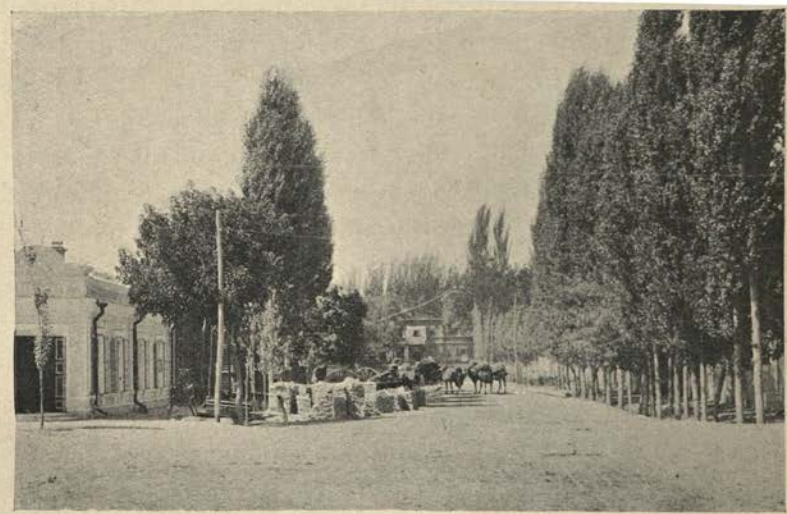
The administrative district of Trans-Caspia extends from the Caspian to the frontier of Bokhara, and is under the authority of a "Chef du Territoire Transcaspien," with headquarters at Askhabad. At the time of my visit this was Lt.-Colonel Bogoliubof, one of the most enlightened administrators it has been my good fortune to meet. He is not only a soldier and a statesman, but a student: the practical problems of his great province,

its commerce, its ethnology, its arts, have all been made by him the subjects of profound investigation, and he talks of them with rare knowledge and enthusiasm. When I had the pleasure of visiting him he was busily engaged upon a great ethnological map of Trans-Caspia, the first that had ever been attempted, and I believe he will some day publish an epoch-making study of Turkoman art, particularly as exhibited in the products of Turkoman needlewomen.

Trans-Caspia has an area of about 215,000 square miles and only about 360,000 inhabitants. Its scanty population cannot increase, because each Turkoman head of a family requires, to live with anything like comfort, ten camels, four to five horses, fifty sheep, and two cows, and to feed these, ten square versts are needed. Camels cannot be replaced by horses, for only camels and asses can eat the prickly "camel's thorn" which is the sole fodder available during much of the year. The attempt to improve the condition of Trans-Caspia is therefore a struggle between civilisation and this nomad life, and it is unlikely that civilisation will win.

Civilisation has had, at any rate, one bad effect—it has killed the carpet. The carpet woven by Turkoman women in their moving tents, without any pattern to copy, the design being handed down in instinct and memory, was, both for design and workmanship, the finest thing of the kind in the world. Old specimens are now almost unprocurable and fetch huge prices, but the examples which may still be had are eagerly bought up. In fact, carpets furnish one of the chief topics of conversation among Russian officers and functionaries quartered in Trans-Caspia. Everybody collects them, and the discussions about price and quality, and the comparisons of "finds" are endless. Carpets are peculiarly convenient to these nomads of civilisation, as they were to the uncivilised nomads who originally made them, for as both soldiers and civilians may not be long in one place they seldom possess much furniture, since it could not be trans-

ported except at an expense which would ruin them, whereas a few empty beer-boxes with carpets and cushions thrown over them, and a few carpets hung on the walls, give you a fine Eastern *salon* at once. Moreover, carpets can be easily taken home, and then if you wish you can probably sell them for



IN THE NEW TASHKENT

much more than you gave for them. There is unfortunately one drawback—all modern carpets fade.

The old carpet, however, is now perhaps the one relic left of a great bygone civilisation, for assuredly the Turkomans in their dirt and squalor could not have invented the beautiful designs that their women made till recently. The patterns and the surroundings are in too great a contrast. The different great tribes of Turkomans—the Sariks, Saliks, and nearer the Caspian the Yumuds—are indistinguishable in their dress, their utensils, their habits, &c.; their carpets alone can serve to distinguish them. These are their passports—their visiting cards. Perhaps these very patterns were given them by Nebuchadnezzar! But aniline dyes and loom competition are killing these fast, and

soon nothing except their old carpets will be left to tell of a mysterious civilisation of the far past. This whole region, as far as China, is the field of rectangular ornaments, and the details of these patterns recur in the most extraordinary fashion. A detail can be traced, for instance, through China, Afghanistan, Persia, and Galicia. In Trans-Caspia are two well-marked races, about whom we know almost everything—in the north the Kirghiz, in the south the Russians. In the farthest south there are two or three tribes of Arabs and Jews, come nobody knows how or when. But the Turkomans are the great mystery, and it will only be from their carpets that the problem of their origin and movements will be solved at last. The magic carpet of Eastern fable, which transports its possessor in an instant to the other end of the earth, has its counterpart in the carpet which will carry the student round the Asian world in the track of its racial design.

Not only cannot the population of Trans-Caspia increase, but, so far as can be foreseen, its productivity is likely to decline. Cotton is its chief, indeed practically its only important export. It formerly possessed the finest race of horses in the world, and the Turkoman, who lived by raiding, esteemed his steed far above all his other belongings, including his wife. But Russian rule has imposed peace upon him, and therefore the need of his horse, and his incentive to breed and cherish him, have gone. So, in spite of Imperial Commissions and the importation of Arab stallions, the fleet and tireless Turkoman horse, with his flashing eye and scarlet nostril, is extinct for ever. And the production of cotton cannot increase without an increase of water for irrigation, and instead of more there is growing steadily less. For the Kopet Dagh Mountains, which rise above Askhabad, and are the great source of water supply, are gradually wearing away. Ages ago there was eternal snow upon them; now they are nowhere more than 9000 feet high. The explanation is that they are of clayey substance. In summer the great heat calcines this clay to

powder, then the rains come and wash it away. Hence the fecundating power of the rivers, but hence also their ultimate disappearance. A geographical authority has said of this whole region that "both glaciers and rivers continue to lose volume; the lakes are shrinking and the extremes of temperature become more marked, while the sands of the desert are steadily encroach-

A COSSACK PATROL IN TASHKENT

ing on the cultivated zones." A well was recently sunk three miles from the mountains to a depth of seven hundred metres without striking water. The truth is that this water question, vital to the prosperity and indeed to the existence of Trans-Caspia, is in the last analysis a political issue—a peculiarly interesting example of the forces underlying diplomacy and national ambitions. For the water-basin of this part of Trans-Caspia is in Persia, and the Amir of Afghanistan controls, in the River Murghab, the water supply of the great Merv oasis and other districts. Therefore if these possessions of Russia are ever to regain their ancient wealth, when Merv, for instance, was really "Queen of the World," Russia must rule in Persia

and Afghanistan. Northern Persia—the province of Khorassan—is probably at her mercy, to seize whenever an opportunity or an excuse presents itself, but Afghanistan is quite another matter, for the British fleet blocks the way thither. Thus the cotton crop of Central Asia, and purchases for Russia on the markets of Richmond and New Orleans—for it is Russia's desire to grow all her own cotton and buy none abroad—depend at last upon the number of ironclads that fly the cross of St. George in the Channel and the Mediterranean. It is, I repeat, a peculiarly interesting example of the correlation of sea-power and political history, but it should not surprise the readers of Captain Mahan.

The cities of Central Asia to-day are of two widely differing kinds—the old and the new, the world-famous towns of antiquity, whose proud and fanatical inhabitants have only been constrained for a few years to tolerate white men among them, and the brand-new settlements which Russia has built up for her administrators, her soldiers, and her merchants. Each kind is the more interesting according to whether you look at it with the eye of the traveller and the ethnologist, or from the point of view of the student of contemporary expansion and politics. Krasnovodsk I have sufficiently described; Kizil Arvat is merely the site of the railway workshops, where a large number of Russian artisans are employed, whose pale wives and children give painful evidence of the unhealthiness of the place and climate; Merv is wholly a new city, the old "Queen of the World" being nothing but a few splendid ruins some distance away, an important military centre where the prevalence of a particularly virulent fever has often suggested the desirability of abandoning the town altogether, and where, a few miles to the east, the Tsar has an "appanage" which irrigation and skilful management are making into a most fertile and profitable estate; Askhabad, the

military headquarters of Turkestan, on account of the proximity of the Persian frontier and the road to Meshed, is almost entirely a new town, where the central railway administration has a range of handsome stone-built offices. None of these calls for any special mention.

In ordinary times the entire garrison of Central Asia is prob-

THE BOYS' COLLEGE, TASHKENT

ably about 30,000 men, with headquarters at Askhabad, and the chief garrisons at Merv, Tashkent, Samarkand, and Andijan. At the present moment this figure is doubtless largely exceeded. The civil administration, which, as everywhere in Russia, is elaborate and highly manned, brings a population of its own, under a Governor-General of Turkestan at Tashkent, a Governor of the Trans-Caspian Territory at Askhabad, and Governors at Samarkand and at Margelan, the administrative centre of Fergana. All the public offices are fine commodious buildings, the officials and their families live in much comfort, indeed, often in luxury, and the foreign shops in the chief towns are large and well stocked. There are admirable schools for Russian children, and many native schools for teaching Russian and elementary subjects.

Two prisons I inspected, and that of Tashkent was, so far as I could see, excellent. The other, a mere guard-room in the citadel of Andijan, was not creditable, for the twenty or thirty prisoners were crowded together in one apartment without distinction of class or crime, the sanitary conditions were offensive, and there was no proper supervision. But Andijan is the latest and remotest Russian town, and doubtless a proper prison will be built before long. It was at the village of Mintiuba, close to Andijan, by the way, that an abortive little revolt broke out in 1898, suppressed with the usual thoroughness of the Russians in such matters, the village being wiped out, a colony of Russian emigrants planted on its site, eight leaders hanged together, and a large number deported to Siberia—*viâ* Moscow !

One curious little fact about Trans-Caspia, by the way, deserves mention. The Persians, of whom there is of course a large working and trading population, insist upon being paid with the Persian *kran*, a small silver coin now worth 40 kopecks. The Russian authorities have recently prohibited its importation, but with the only effect, so far, of causing its price to appreciate.

The capital of Russian Central Asia—though no such nominal position exists—is undoubtedly Tashkent, "the city of stone," at the northern terminus of the railway in Turkestan, and presently to be connected with Europe *viâ* Oldenburg. Here the two kinds of city and the two races are best seen side by side. Tashkent was for many generations, and perhaps still remains, the most important strategical focus of Central Asia. An interesting and significant incident is connected with its capture. The gallant Chernaieff, advancing victorious from the north, attacked it in 1864, but was beaten back with heavy loss. Alexander II., averse to further slaughter in a cause whose importance he had not realised, and perhaps fearing complications with England, for bade him to make a second attempt. The outcome is a striking

example of how Russian officials on remote frontiers drag Russian policy at their heels. Chernaieff appears to have known what was in the Tsar's despatches, so he attacked first, took the city by storm, and then opened his papers. The reply he sent, as given by Ney (quoted by Ross and Skrine), was this: "Your Majesty's order forbidding me to take Tashkent has reached me only in the city itself, which I have taken and place at your Majesty's feet." His career was ruined by this act, but Tashkent was promptly used as a base from which to subjugate Samarkand and Bokhara. It is after Chernaieff htat the junction of Chernayevo is named.

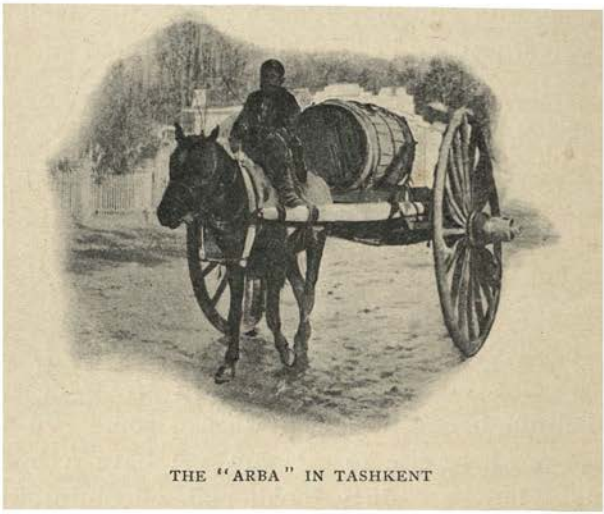
A FAMILIAR SIGHT IN TASHKENT

Tashkent is probably to-day the largest town in Asiatic Russia, for in 1885 it was nearly as populous at Tiflis, having 120,000 inhabitants, and covering an area of twelve square miles. The first thing that strikes you as you drive from the station is the width of the streets, and the second the mud. The former are often fifty yards wide, and the latter is a foot deep. Through this wades and splashes an extraordinary procession of men and beasts—Tajiks, the chief race, of Persian descent, in turbans and multi-coloured *khalats*, or loose-sleeved robes gathered at the waist with a sash, their material depending upon the wealth of the owner; Kirghiz in skins with the fur inside and tight-fitting caps; women in sad-toned garments and draped from crown to sole in thick, absolutely opaque horsehair veils; Russian soldiers, always in the same thick grey felt overcoats—in fact, all the Eastern humanity seen by Matthew Arnold in the past:

> The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
> Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
> And close-set skull-caps ; and those wilder hordes
> Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste ;
> Kalmucks and unkempt Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
> Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
> Who came on shaggy ponies from Pamere.

They ride on horses, on donkeys—often two adults on one little beast—on shaggy camels or in the *arba* shown in my photograph, with enormously high wheels to enable it to ford rivers without wetting its load, the driver seated on the horse in the shafts. The Russian town, which has 5000 or 6000 inhabitants, consists of well-built, low houses of brick and stucco, with roofs of sheet iron painted green, and the streets, as everywhere else in these Russian settlements, are planted on each side with shade trees, chiefly silver poplars. In the Russian shops most of the necessaries and some of the luxuries of life may be bought, though they do not compare with the shops of far Siberian towns. There is no such thing as an hotel, its place being taken, *longo intervallo*, by what are called *Nomera*—"numbers," that is, furnished rooms, to which, if you have nowhere else to eat, you can have a greasy meal brought. These are dirty, cold, and uncomfortable. But there is a magnificent military club, with a theatre and ball-room, where you can find all the papers, including a local bi-weekly, the *Viedomosti*, play cards or billiards, and fare very well indeed, being waited upon by soldier orderlies. The Governor-General—when I was there, the late General Dukhovskoi—who rules over the whole of Turkestan, lives in a charming old-fashioned, wide-spreading residency, filled with precious Eastern objects. On nights of official reception the staircase is lined with picturesque native troops who supply a fitting local colour, and several bands of oriental performers with weird instruments provide local sound. I can no longer

thank General Dukhovskoi for all his kindness, but the hospitality so brilliantly dispensed by Madame Dukhovskoi will not be forgotten by anybody who ever enjoyed it. The large staff of officials at Tashkent works in spacious quarters in buildings which, as they were erected thirty years ago, show the foresight that provided accommodation for all the development to follow. The garrison at the time of my visit consisted of four battalions of sharpshooters (*strelki*), two of the line, one of



THE "ARBA" IN TASHKENT

engineers, a regiment of Cossacks, and some artillery. There is an observatory, equipped with instruments brought on camel-back across the desert. But the sight remaining most vividly in my memory is the *Realschule* of Tashkent. This was not only wonderful because it was in the heart of Asia, but also because it would be an admirable school even in London or New York. The enthusiastic headmaster, Prince Dolgoruki, conducted me over it, and a better equipped or more capably managed educational institution could hardly be found. A complete course of instruction is given, and the class-rooms, museums, laboratories, gymnasiums, &c., were on the latest

German model. There are two hundred and ninety-six scholars, all sons of Russian officials and residents except two, the son of the late Amir of Kokand and the son of a rich native merchant. Among the professors was Mr. Howard, a Russian subject, admirably teaching the English classes, and I was invited to satisfy myself of the ability of his scholars. The school costs 40,000 roubles a year, of which the boys contribute forty roubles each and the State the rest. They take only their déjeuner at school, and for this they pay seven roubles each per half-year. I saw this meal, and how it is provided for the money I cannot tell. Afterward I visited the Technical School, and here, remembering the admirable Austrian native schools of Bosnia, I was disappointed to find but very few native boys. It appears, however, that they invariably fall behind, and most of them leave after the second year. But any native boy who wishes to learn can attend one of the gratuitous schools in the native quarter where Russian is taught and elementary instruction given by some of the most devoted educationalists I have seen, who live in discomfort and on a pittance, devoted to their work and worshipped by their scholars. Altogether, in fact, Russia is doing more to educate her people, both Russian and native, in Central Asia than she is doing in Europe.

The native quarter of Tashkent contains nothing of interest, unless it be the old citadel which Chernaieff stormed and afterward put in repair for his own defence. It is simply a wide *enceinte* surrounded by high earthen walls, commanding the city by a number of guns. Within its area are the magazines and barracks, but as a military work it is long out of date. No foreigner has ever visited it, so I remarked to the Governor-General that I should like to do so. He was surprised, but upon reflection, seeing no reason why he should refuse, consented, and issued a written order that I should be admitted. The officer in command was the most surprised individual in Central Asia when I arrived with my order. He conducted me

into the guard-room within the walls, and then inquired courteously what it was that I wished to see ; for, said he, "There is nothing whatever remarkable in the citadel."

"I beg your pardon," I replied, "but I believe there is a most extraordinary thing here at this moment."

"What may that be ?" he asked in much surprise.

"An Englishman," I said ; and he laughed and admitted

FATHER AND SON IN TASHKENT

that it was indeed so. This citadel, however, reminds me of an incident which explains how Chernaieff came to conquer these peoples as he did. After the storming, and even before the dead natives had all been buried, and almost before the firing had ceased, finding himself war-stained and uncomfortable from not having changed his clothes for days, he went, alone and unattended, on the very afternoon of his victory, in spite of the protests of his staff, to the vapour-baths in the native city. Such extraordinary coolness and indifference made a greater impression than all his Cossacks and cannon. This is, indeed, how natives are taught who is their master, as our own earlier Indian annals abundantly show.

Statistics of Central Asian trade are not easy to procure, for Russia is very jealous of foreign curiosity there. The annual report, for example, of the Trans-Caspian Railway is printed in two parts, one the military and confidential portion; the other the commercial. The director of the railway at Askhabad bluntly refused to give me the latter, though the highest local authority ordered him to do so, without a direct order from the Minister of War, and this of course I did not apply for, as it would have invested my natural and innocent curiosity with a suspicious importance. But certainly Russian trade here has grown by leaps and bounds, except with Afghanistan, where it has ceased altogether, for political reasons, and by the action of the Amir. Askhabad station was opened in December 1885, and by October 1886 no less than 360,000 pouds of merchandise had passed through *en route* for Persia. Taking the average of the three years previous to the opening of the railway, 1883–5, and the average of four years, 1893–6, the imports of the country nearly trebled, while the exports nearly quadrupled. During the year 1899 (the latest statistical year), the Trans-Caspian Railway carried 24,999 passengers and 376,000 tons of freight, and its gross receipts were £725,376, or £590 per mile. And this, be it remembered, upon a railway originally built as a strategical line and until a short time ago under the direct control of the Minister of War. The exception to the development of trade is Afghanistan—a fact evidently unknown to writers who have pointed morals by the relations of Russians and Afghans in Central Asia.

In 1895 Afghan exports to Russian territory were of the value of 209,000 roubles; and in 1896 of 83,000 roubles; while Russia exported to Afghanistan in 1895, 21,000 roubles, and in 1896 the trade ceased completely. The trade of Persia, it should be added, is with Russia proper; Trans-Caspia is merely the point of transit and produces nothing which Persia buys.

It will be evident, I think, before I have done with Central Asia, and I may as well set down the reflection now, that Russia has carried out a great task here, and on the whole, most worthily. Not only must the greatness of her conquest evoke our admiration, but the qualities of civilisation she has afterwards imposed, the peace, the commerce, the comparative happiness and well-being of the people, should also win our sincere respect.

CHAPTER XIX

NEW BOKHARA AND ITS PROSPECTS

RUSSIA has been very careful not to annex the Khanate of Bokhara. She had enough on her hands in Central Asia without undertaking direct responsibility for the government of three million fanatical Mussulmans, who have never learned the lesson that Skobelef administered to the Turkomans. So she made it into a Protected State, thereby securing all the advantages of control and commerce, without assuming the obligation of good government. She has nothing to fear from Bokhara; the Amir is a nonentity, mentally and physically exhausted, though not yet forty; her own territory is on both sides of it; her main railway runs within ten miles of the capital and could bring a small army in a day; by her control of the Zarafshan she has Bokhara at her mercy, for she could cut off the water-supply and ruin every crop at once; and no trade except Russian is permitted. So the Bokharans are left in their original dirt and cruelty and corruption, nominally under the rule of their own sovereign. He, however, does not greatly appreciate his position, for he spends all his time at a hunting lodge near Termene, the fifth station up the line beyond the capital, 44 miles away, his passion being for falconry—a sport the local importance of which may be judged from the fact that the principal Minister of State is called *Khuz Begi*, "Chief of the Falconers." He receives reports, however, every day, brought by relays of horsemen who cover the distance in three hours—the railway taking four! In his capital his prestige is gone, and he dislikes the vicinity of his Russian masters, but on the rare occasions—sometimes not once

in a year—when he visits Bokhara he sharply reminds his people of his existence by taking a dozen condemned wretches from the prison and having their throats cut in the open bazaar. I said that Russia had left Bokhara in its original cruelty, but this is not quite accurate. She has abolished the open sale of slaves and the native method of execution by trussing hapless criminals like fowls and flinging them from the top of the great tower. But otherwise she has left Bokhara as it was, and, above all, she has left untouched the prison of execrable memory. Here it was that the two English officers, Stoddart and Connolly, sent on a diplomatic mission from the Indian Government about sixty years ago, were flung into the pit where sheep-ticks, most loathsome of insects, gnawed the flesh from the bones of living men.

When the Russians reached Bokhara with their railway they were rather afraid of the natives, and as a measure of precaution they created New Bokhara, eight miles from Old Bokhara, and placed the station there. Now they realise that their caution was excessive, and wish they had originally gone straight to the town, and thus avoided the necessity of building a branch railway to connect it with the main line. New Bokhara consists of a few European houses, the Residency and offices, and a clean and comfortable little hostelry, called the Hôtel d'Europe, kept by a worthy German and his wife. The Amir maintains a suite of rooms in a native house in the old city for the use of the Resident, who thereby avoids disturbing the populace by too much show of foreign dominion. M. Ignatieff was so kind as to allow me to use these rooms, as there is, of course, no place in the native city where a foreigner can even take a meal.

The Resident has a personal escort of about a score of Cossacks, and there is a detachment of railway sappers, who do technical work and furnish guards for the bank, post-office, &c. The Amir, on the other hand—and the contrast is instructive—is allowed to keep a so-called army of 30,000 men in the whole country, 10,000 of whom are in the city of Bokhara. In spite

of their scarlet trousers they can hardly be called soldiers, and their best weapons are a few thousand old rifles given them by Russia, with old-fashioned triangular bayonets. Concerning these rifles, and bearing their origin in mind, my meaning will doubtless be obvious when I say that I should be quite willing to let a Bisley marksman shoot at me at a hundred yards with one of them. And while speaking of the Bokharan army I must repeat a pleasant story I read somewhere. The Amir's forces were once exhibiting themselves at a field-day before a Russian general. Suddenly, to his intense surprise, all the men in the front line threw themselves upon their backs and waved their legs in the air. But he was more astonished still when, in reply to his inquiry as to the military purport of this remarkable manœuvre, he was assured that it was exactly copied from the Russian drill! The explanation turned out to be that once, when Russian troops were attacking, they had been obliged to ford a stream waist-deep, and on gaining the bank they had all lain down and lifted up their legs to let the water run out of their long boots. The Bokharians, attributing the victory which immediately followed to this impressive stratagem, had promptly incorporated it in their own tactics!

Political writers about Central Asia often speculate upon the possibility of a Mussulman rising against Russia there, and as Bokhara is undoubtedly the most fanatical country, this seems the place to say a few words on the subject. If there should ever be a real Pan-Islamic movement—if the Mussulman world should ever be inspired with a common religious fervour against the Cross, then, of course, the Crescent would be raised in Central Asia also, and the Russians would have all they could do for a short time. And such an outburst is not quite as improbable as most people think. It will hardly come from the appeals and intrigues of the ruler of the Ottoman Turks in Constantinople, who enjoys among millions of his co-religionists no loftier title than "Sultan of Roum," although the fact is remarkable that

certain communities who hitherto acknowledged no allegiance to him, as in Tripoli, for instance, now accept the obligation of military service for the defence of Islam, but many little signs—such as the collection of £2000 by the *Anjuman-i-Islam* in Bombay for the projected Damascus-Mecca railway—show that it is not altogether out of the question. After the revolt in Fergana in 1898 the Russian authorities were very anxious for a time about the state of Bokhara, and the telegraph line to Tashkent was monopolised with military conversations. Curiously enough, at that very moment a Russian railway watchman was killed by a native. The latter was tried by a Court consisting of the Acting Resident and two native Begs, and was condemned to death. And then the Russians played one of those little master-strokes of policy which, insignificant in themselves, contribute so largely to their success with Oriental races. Instead of making a mystery and conferring great importance upon the incident by executing the murderer in the Russian town, with all the elaborate ceremonial of a European death-penalty, they simply handed him over to the Bokharan authorities, who cut his throat in the bazaar in the good old way. This completely reassured the native authorities, who had believed that the Russian would treat the murder as a political offence, and make it an excuse for annexing the country.

The war between Turkey and Greece, again, produced a considerable impression in Bokhara, and the news was eagerly discussed in the bazaars. The Resident discovered some Turks from Egypt, fomenting religious feeling, and the Political Agent at Tashkent told me that he had found and arrested several fanatical *mollahs* from Constantinople. On one Friday evening I was enabled by a Russian friend, who is an acute and sympathetic student of native life, to enjoy the rare advantage of being present at the regular prayers of a widespread dervish sect in one of the chief towns, and nobody could witness the profound attention of the crowd at first, gradually growing into fanatical fervour,

and finally reaching a height of religious madness when anything would have been possible, the whole crowd swaying rapidly and abruptly back and forth to the deafening rhythmic staccato shout of *Ya hou! Ya hak!*—and not realise that the tinder and the spark are never very far apart in Central Asia. For these men, barking like mad wolves under the temporary sway of religious hypnotism, were not performing for Christian money, like the dervish mummers of Cairo, but were just pious Mussulmans come to prayers and in many cases plainly drawn into the vortex in spite of themselves. But a Russian fort was not two miles away, and at a warning gun four thousand men would have sprung to arms. Pan-Islamism, even if it should break forth, would accomplish nothing in Russian Asia—unless Russia herself should be fighting for her life elsewhere.

A local revolt in Bokhara, however, is another matter, and upon this I have a decided opinion, namely, that it is more than probable. But it will be a revolt in favour of Russia, not against her. Government in Bokhara under Russian protection is, as I have said, almost as bad as under unmitigated native oppression, and in the matter of tax-gathering—always more considered by a native than life and liberty—it is quite as bad. Now the Bokharan looks across the border into Samarkand, and sees that his fellows under Russian rule, men with neither more land nor more fertile land than himself, are contented and comparatively rich, and know precisely what their obligations are and how much money the tax-collector will require of them; while they themselves know neither, and must live at the mercy and the whim of every cruel and rapacious official. Therefore the prospect is that sooner or later, when they have outgrown their dislike of the infidel, the Bokharans will demand to be taken under Russian government. One informant assured me that this would have been done before now except for the fact that when the Amir visited the Tsar at his coronation the latter promised him that no change should be made in the status of Bokhara while he reigned, and that

consequently if the Amir dies before the Tsar another Amir will be allowed to rule. But even in this case a stricter supervision would probably be exercised, especially as regards taxing the people. Indeed, there are other signs that a change in this direction is coming, for a handsome new palace is being built halfway between New and Old Bokhara, the intention—it was M. Lessar's idea—being that the Amir shall have some fitting place in which to receive the Russian authorities, who will doubtless take advantage of more frequent interviews to exert a more extended influence. But meanwhile, Russia has clearly had every advantage in leaving things as they are, and up to the present her tendency has been rather to shift burdens on to the Amir's shoulders than to relieve him of any—as in the cession to Bokhara of Roshan and Shignan from the British sphere. This is not at all to the taste of the military caste in Tashkent and Merv, who would like nothing so much as an order to march on Bokhara, in view of the ease of the campaign, and the shower of crosses, medals, and promotions that would follow.

The Trans-Caspian Railway has, of course, wrought a revolution since it reached the valley of the Zarafshan. In pre-railway days Bokhara's connection with Russia was by the old caravan route *viâ* Kazalinsk and Orenburg, when the cost of transport was three roubles a poud and the journey depended on so many accidental circumstances—a scarcity of camels, for instance—that its duration could never be foreseen, and goods sometimes remained at Kazalinsk for months, spoiling, while all the risks were the sender's, since nobody would grant insurances against them. Up to 1887 Russia sent to Bokhara iron, crockery, sugar, cheap safes, oils and colours, to the extent of about 8000 tons a year, and Bokhara exported to Russia and to Turkestan some 16,000 tons of cotton, wool, sheep-skins, goat-skins, and *karakul*—the lamb-skin we know as "astrachan." At this time, however, Bokhara enjoyed a trade of over 3000 tons a year with India, *viâ* Afghanistan, importing indigo, green tea, and English

manufactures, but the new railway enabled Moscow manufacturers to flood the market with cheap manufactured articles, driving out the better but dearer English goods, a process which the Russian Government completed when necessary by prohibitive tariffs. Bokhara was the depôt for tea and indigo for the whole country, and it now gets, *viâ* Meshed, Askhabad, Dushak, and Kaakhka, the remnant of what used to reach it from Kabul. For sugar Russia has established depôts at Bokhara and remits the excise and pays a bounty upon all that is sold there. Bokharan imports have risen from 8000 tons in 1887 to over 42,000 tons in 1896, but exports have not risen in proportion, having never exceeded 21,000 tons. This discrepancy is attributed by the local authority I have previously quoted to four causes: the limited sphere which is really tapped by the railway, and the indifference of merchants to districts distant from the railway, without waggon-roads or regular communication by the Amu-Darya; the rapid growth of new needs among natives served by the railway; the difficulty in the cultivation of American cotton owing to the uncertainty of water supply; and the truly Oriental carelessness of the Bokharan Government regarding its products—for example, twenty-five years ago the silkworm industry flourished and is now in decay. When these conditions, however, are removed, Bokhara will once more be in a position to export in proportion to its imports, for, thanks to the railway, which carries wheat at the very low rate of 1/100th of a kopeck per poud per verst, grain can be bought as cheaply as it can be grown, and the land thus left free for more valuable crops. Moreover, as in 1893–4, the railway will render famine from bad harvests impossible. The principal new objects which the railway has taught the natives to use are kerosene, building materials, passementerie, and stearine candles. The consumption of these articles increases regularly, but with the exception of candles, which go as far as Afghanistan, they do not yet reach nearly the whole of the Khanate.

Before the railway came, capital could hardly turn over once a year, because of the difficulty of communications with Europe, and therefore Russian commerce was confined to a few wealthy Bokharan merchants. But now that goods can be delivered in Moscow in from 35 to 40 days, direct relations are possible even to small capitalists, and the natives take every advantage of this, with the result that competition is very keen and the people enjoy the lowest possible prices. The establishment of elementary processes of manufacture, on the other hand, such as cleaning, packing, tanning, has quadrupled wages, and cultivated land has risen enormously in value. My Bokharan authority claims, and rightly, I think, that the two facts (1) that a total annual trade of £3,000,000 is done by a population of 3,000,000 souls, one half of whom take no part whatever either in producing or purchasing; and (2) that the imports are 3,000,000 roubles more in value than the exports, show that the trade of Bokhara must necessarily increase largely, as soon as the conditions which prevent the greater part of the mountainous regions of the Khanate from taking any share in the commerce with European Russia are changed. It is confidently held, too, that the mountainous districts of Bokhara are the natural half-way house of trade between Moscow and Afghanistan. At present there are no direct relations, although Bokharan merchants bring every year a certain amount of produce, chiefly *karakul*, from Afghanistan and send it to the fair of Nijni Novgorod, paying for it in iron, cotton, sugar and candles, but the natural trade route to Kabul, well known to the Afghans, runs through Bokhara, and therefore in the future Russian manufactures should be exchanged for Afghan raw materials *viâ* Bokhara. Then Bokhara will stand to Afghanistan in a relation similar to that of Trans-Caspia to Persia, but more favourably, for whereas Trans-Caspia trades with only one province, Khorassan, Bokhara will exchange with the whole rich and densely populated northern part of Afghanistan, beginning with Kabul, which has an area equal to the whole of

Bokhara, and which, when the roads are somewhat improved, will be able to seek an outlet for its products in Bokhara, rather than send them over the difficult mountains to the south, to find a market in the direction of Kandahar. So, at least, they believe in Bokhara; but, apart from other considerations, it is obvious that the development of a trade route over the Murghab branch line to Kushk and Herat, if England and Russia should agree upon it, would upset most of their calculations.

There is one other industry that should be mentioned, for although it has only just been started, its success—and the few who have invested in it have a firm faith in its future—would have an enormous influence upon the development of Bokhara. I refer to gold-mining. It would seem inherently probable that in such a mountainous country as a large part of Bokhara minerals would be found, and gold in paying quantities may well be along them. Two Russian commercial residents have begun the work of seriously developing one district known to be gold-bearing. Their mine is 530 miles from Bokhara city, and at present can only be reached on horseback. They hold a concession of seven properties, each two versts square, and one of these they are working. They have reached the gold-bearing stratum at a depth of fifteen metres, and they were getting one *zolotnik* of gold from every hundred pouds of dirt washed—say 2 dwt. to the ton. They pay the Amir a royalty of five per cent. of the gold produced, and an annual rent of about two shillings an acre. Against the small returns of gold may be set the fact that labour is plentiful and wages are from sixpence to eightpence a day, and that there is abundance of water. The owners of this concession are very anxious to get foreign capital to help them to prove and develop their six remaining properties.

My lady readers may like to know something of the origin of the fur which becomes them so well, known to them as "astrachan" (Astrakhan used to be its port of entry into Russia) or "Persian lamb," and to those who produce it as *karakul*. It is

the skin of the very young lamb—not of the unborn lamb, as is commonly believed—and the best comes from Afghanistan. Its high cost is due to the heavy export duty the Amir of Afghanistan places upon it, which his subjects regularly try to evade by smuggling. In Bokhara the Afghan skins are mixed in parcels of ten with inferior local skins, and thence they go to Novgorod, to Moscow and especially to the great annual fur fair of the world at Leipzig. Only the best are kept for sale in Central Asia, and for these the Russian dealers give about 32 roubles—£3 7s., $16.50—for ten skins, though the best single skin will fetch as much as fifteen shillings—$3.60. I bought excellent grey skins in Tiflis at the rate of 28 roubles for ten. Another curious Bokharan export, of which also those who use it do not guess the source, is sheep's guts, prepared for violin strings under the supervision of Russian workmen.

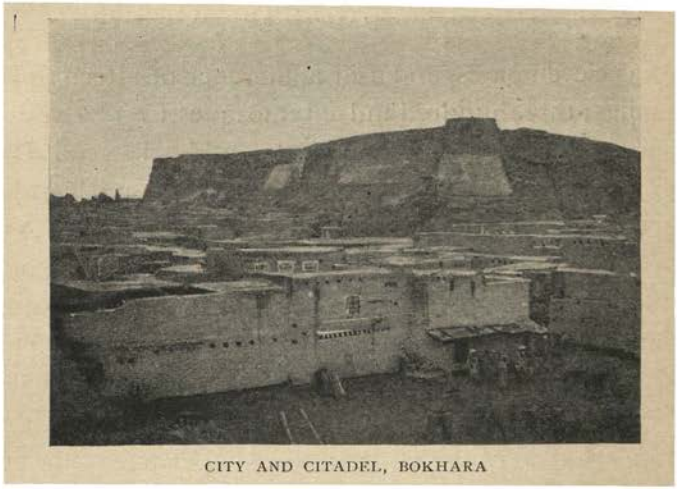
I remarked above that the natives had imported for themselves since the railway came, and that prices of European goods rule very low in Bokhara. This is partly due to a very peculiar system of trading which prevails there. There is now only one firm of Russian importers in the city, and the native merchants, the Sarts, have been accustomed to conduct their business as follows. They go to Moscow themselves, give their orders, get long credit, return to Bokhara, sell their goods for less than they paid for them, and invest the cash thus raised in cotton or silk or skins. In a good year their profits cover their loss and leave a handsome balance. In a bad year they fail and pay fifteen or twenty kopecks on the rouble. The Moscow merchants know that when a man has paid for four or five years in succession he is sure to go under, but their profits have been so good that if they were paid for four years they could well afford to lose the fifth. Now, however, the Trans-Siberian Railway has given them so much more to do that they care less about Central Asian trade and are refusing the old long credit.

CHAPTER XX

OLD BOKHARA AND ITS HORRORS

"IT has eleven gates, and a circumference of fifteen English miles; three hundred and sixty mosques, twenty-two caravanserays, many baths and bazaars, and the old palace called Ark, built by Arslan Khan one thousand years ago, and has about one hundred splendid colleges." So wrote of old Bokhara that singular divine, the Rev. Dr. Wolff, sixty years ago, one of the very few Europeans to visit it before the conquering Russian army, a witness to whom I shall presently recur. Like all the East, alas, Bokhara is no longer what it was, but it is a mightily impressive city all the same. And the more so because it is among the rare places where the Oriental does not cringe to the white face. One notices a distinct difference in the attitude of the natives towards foreigners here, from that of the Turkomans of Trans-Caspia and the Sarts of Samarkand. The Turkomans were crushed by Skobelef at Geok Tepe once for all; they will never lift a hand again. The Sarts are urban and mercantile people, and are wholly resigned to the present *régime*. The Bokharans, on the other hand, are still nominally a free race. They see few strangers, and they dislike them intensely. As you go about the crowded narrow streets of Bokhara you meet with studied indifference or black looks, except from the Jews, and it is easy to see that indiscreet action would provoke instant reprisals against yourself. This is one reason why the Russian authorities do not encourage visitors to Bokhara, and indeed some passports issued for Central Asia include it with the Murghab branch of the railway as a forbidden place.

When I was there the new branch line from the Russian settlement to the native city was not built, so I drove eight miles along a flat, dull, dusty road, passing to the left the new palace the Russians are building for the Amir—a handsome heterogeneous sort of structure, half Oriental, half European—and to the left an old palace completely hidden behind high mud walls



CITY AND CITADEL, BOKHARA

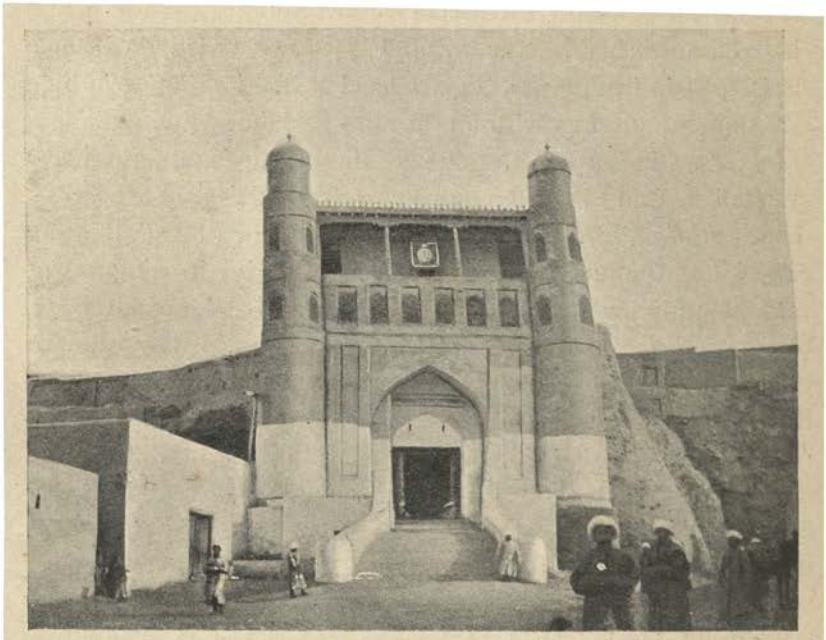
Midway we stopped at a roadside hovel with a big water-trough in front, and while the horses drank, the owner brought out a great gourd water-pipe, with a red charcoal on top, and passed it to my driver, who drew one deep inhalation and passed it to another driver, who handed it to a third, and so on till it had been used by the half-dozen teamsters watering their beasts there. No man even wiped the mouthpiece as it passed from mouth to mouth. I mention this incident because it goes some way toward justifying the statement of a Russian physician quoted to me, that eighty per cent. of the inhabitants of Bokhara suffer from the worst of contagious diseases.

The approach to the centre of the city is through a great gateway in the wall, and then by long, narrow streets, between high walls. In the true fashion of the East, where domesticity

is of all things most secret, the houses all look inwards, presenting blank backs, broken only by a huge door, to the passers-by. After a mile or more of these you reach the great covered bazaar, with charming corners where mulberry-trees drop their fat berries into shaded ponds, and gossiping men sit sipping coffee or green tea and smoking the inevitable *kalian*. Already the convenient Russian samovar is in general use, and indeed is made here. Each trade has its own street. Workmen in leather, in iron, brass, tin, are hard at it, stitching, grinding, riveting, hammering, with all the strange labour-saving dodges of the machineless East. Much of the bazaar is under a heavy vaulted roof, and here the more valuable articles are exposed—books, stuffs, the embroidered skull-caps worn by all, the gay silk *khalats*, the universal outer garment like a dressing-gown, rolls of rainbow-like watered silk from native looms, carpets, cottons and crockery from Moscow, exquisite *kugans*, ewers of chased and hammered brass—irresistible to the foreign visitor, the most characteristic and interesting objects here. The money-changers are as usual conspicuous—Hindus, with the orange flame-shaped caste marks on their foreheads, great heaps of little brass coins and big lumps of silver before them, and a stock of the beautiful Bokharan gold coins in leather bags tucked into their breasts. The Jews are in evidence everywhere, recognisable by their drab *khalats*, square hats trimmed with fur, and the cord round their waists. Anti-Semitism has always reigned in Bokhara, and every Jew is compelled to wear a cord round his waist. The original intention was that this should be a genuine piece of rope, but the Jew of to-day obeys the letter and escapes the spirit of the proscription by wearing a thin silk cord, or, if he is poor, just a little bit of string.

Twelve or fourteen years ago this bazaar was filled with English goods, but the Russians deliberately set about killing that trade, and the long credits of the Moscow merchants helped. Now nothing is English but the fine muslin used for

the voluminous turbans (in Persia for shrouding the dead), which Moscow cannot make. The native velvet of brilliant colours running one into the other, greatly admired by the Bokharan, though thin and poor in quality, is from 14 to 17½ inches wide, and costs from three to four shillings the *arshin* (28 inches). The watered rainbow silk of the same width costs



THE PORTAL OF THE AMIR'S PALACE, BOKHARA

about 2*s*. the *arshin*. After long haggling I bought a beautiful brass *kurgan*, fifteen inches high, for six roubles.

Sunday is bazaar-day in Bokhara, and the crowd is extraordinary. The road from stall to stall is packed with men and beasts and carts, each man shouting to all the others to get out of his way, and belabouring the nearest beast. For those on foot it is one congested jostle. The mounted are of many kinds: big men on little asses—often with veiled women sitting behind them; boys astride asses' cruppers with sacks before

them; proud cavaliers, magnificent in multi-coloured silk and velvet, on splendid horses of Arab-like breed from Turkestan; camels with silent feet and horrid face high above all and pushing ruthlessly through; every now and then one of the Amir's officers, followed by his suite, preceded by grooms on foot smartly clearing a way with sticks; then suddenly the *batcha*, thrust close by the crowd, staring curiously at you with wise old eyes in a child's face—the scene entrances till you weary of it, which is soon. The charm of the East is in its mysteries, its thoughts unuttered, its opinions veiled, its eloquent silence, the strange things it knows and does not tell: this noise and pushing are of the West you know. Besides, there is too much horror here—the hot smallpox marks, the unmistakable pallor of the leper, the dirty bandage where the Bokharan worm has been pulled from the flesh, the feature rotted away from unnamable evil, the mutilation from gangrenous wound or judicial torture. You shoulder your way to a side-street, in a few minutes the bazaar is only a distant surf-like murmur, and you venture a deep breath again.

The *batcha* of whom I have spoken is one of the peculiarities of Samarkand. He is the singing and dancing boy, corresponding to the *geisha* of Japan. It is needless to inquire very closely into his career, which depends upon his looks and gifts, and not infrequently brings him wealth by the time his beard comes and he "retires," but it is an interesting and instructive fact about Bokharan life that a number of high officials to-day were formerly *batchas*, and I was told that during my visit there were hardly any left in the city, as the Amir had sent for them all! While I had lunch a carpet was spread in the courtyard and a band of *batchas* was brought to dance and sing. The natives took the greatest possible interest in the performance, crowding in, and appearing on every house-top around, but it seemed to me a dull show. The singing, which, perhaps fortunately, I did not understand, showed a certain amount of training, but the so-called dancing seemed aimless, and some of the band were of the

most repulsive ugliness. Doubtless for a performance before an infidel, in broad daylight, these epicene artists did not give the rein to their passion, as otherwise it would be impossible to explain the mad admiration and devotion they excite among their native patrons. But they would not come for less than twenty roubles, all the same, and they were very dear at the money. As Mr. Skrine truly remarks, the European never feels more acutely the gulf between East and West than when he witnesses the enthusiasm excited by the mimic passions of such a scene. My illustration is a photograph I took at the time of an extremely popular *batcha*. I have always been greatly interested in native dances, and often found them repay careful study, but Bokhara contributed little to my notes on this subject—not to be compared for a moment to the charming dancing of Japan, or that most wonderful and eloquent dance I witnessed and photographed in Seoul, the capital of Korea.*

A "BATCHA" OF BOKHARA

Every respectable woman in Bokhara goes, of course, veiled, and her veil is of horsehair, thick and long enough totally to obliterate her personality. Nothing but the little pointed toe of a scarlet or green boot, or a mud-plastered shapeless extremity, betrays the presence behind the veil of a woman whose looks still justify coquetry, or of a poor old labouring hag. The unveiled ladies have a street to themselves, where they sit on

* See "The Real Japan," Chapter IX., and "The Peoples and Politics of the Far East," p 354 *sqq*.

their balconies in velvet robes and weighed down with cheap metal ornaments. As they offer the only opportunity of seeing what the women of this country look like, I took advantage once of having a Cossack with me to get him to gather a little group of them together to be photographed—with

THE UNVEILED LADIES OF BOKHARA

the result you see. They thought it great fun, and were made very happy with a rouble or two and some handfuls of cigarettes.

Bokhara is the focus of Mohammedanism in Central Asia, since its teaching here is free of all Christian interference. Therefore the *madrassas*, or theological colleges, are still the homes of devotion and fanaticism, and enjoy all their original prestige. Therefore, also, a Christian cannot enter them. Buttheir original architectural beauty has vanished, for the two chief ones, which

face each other in the middle of the town, were once covered with exquisite blue tiles and are now meanly repaired with great patches of mortar. At one mosque in Bokhara two thousand worshippers can pray at once. Another has a façade entirely formed of delicately carved wood, now of that beautiful greyness which untouched wood takes on with age. In front of it there is a quiet spot where willows and birches droop over a trickling fountain, and here an old man in a bright yellow *khalat*, seated upon a low square stool, was reading aloud ancient Asian history to scattered groups of deeply attentive listeners. From time to time one of them would rise, walk by the reader and drop a coin for him and silently disappear, while others would as silently join the circle. I stood a long time watching this scene, held by its charm, the monotonous voice of the reader, and the remoteness of it all from one's own world. The genuine untouched East, exactly the same to-day as it was a thousand years ago, is rare now.

I had not been in the city an hour, on my first visit, before there was a commotion in the crowd and a huge old gentleman in a brilliant striped *khalat*, mounted on a fine horse and followed by several attendants, came pushing his way through the crowd, careless of whom he trod upon or knocked aside. It was evident from the demeanour of the people that he inspired respect if not fear, so when he reined up sharply by me and began to address me volubly, I was prepared for some sort of a scene. It turned out that he was the chief of police, and that he had been despatched by the *Khuz Begi*, the ruler of the city in the Amir's absence, to find the foreigner reported to be in the bazaar, and request him to present himself at once at the palace. I have had so many of these dreary receptions, and my time was being so much more interestingly occupied, that I made every excuse I could think of. I was not fittingly dressed to wait upon his mightiness, my time was very short, I begged the policeman to present my respects and excuses, and so on. But it was of no use, and the worthy

man became so insistent that I saw it would be discreet to comply without further delay.

The nondescript "palace" to which we made our way may be better judged from my illustration than described. It is the old "Ark," built in 1742, and the clock between its towers was the ransom an Italian prisoner gave for his life. The slope leading to it was lined with soldiery, wearing black astrachan hats, black tunics, scarlet trousers and high boots, and groups of officials eyed us curiously and without any obvious approval. The actual entrance behind the towers is up a narrow sloping passage, evidently made to admit a horse, with queer dark cell-like rooms off it at intervals — the sleeping quarters of the soldiers, and perhaps places of detention also. At last we were ushered into an ante-chamber, beyond which was a kind of banqueting-room, and in the former we were immediately joined by that redoubtable personage, the Chief of the Falconers himself. He was a short, enormously fat man, with a patriarchal white beard, a colossal white turban, and a splendid *khalat* of flowered white silk. A native interpreter, speaking Russian, accompanied him, so our conversation was done at two removes, through my own interpreter. He greeted me with a string of profuse and variegated compliments, and begged me to partake of refreshments. As soon as we entered the adjoining chamber I saw that I should be lucky if I escaped in a couple of hours, for a most elaborate and picturesque *dastarkhán*, or spread of sweetmeats of every kind, was on the table, too obviously the prelude to a corresponding feast. And so it proved, the troop of servants swept away course after course, the well-known *shashlik*, the *shurpa*, boiled mutton with rice, the *kavardik*, ragoût of mutton and onions, the *kebab*, grilled knobs of mutton, and the profusion of fruit and sugary cakes; while finding that I did not drink the sweet champagne very fast out of one glass they tried the hospitable but ineffective expedient of filling several glasses with it and placing them temptingly within reach of my hand.

The conversation was of a similar sugary character. I asked after his Highness Sayid Abdul Ahad, and if he was soon coming to Bokhara. I was informed that he was very busy but that he would soon come to conduct affairs of state. The *Khuz Begi* hoped "my Queen" was in good health, and that the war in which she was engaged was progressing well. I was thankful to say the Queen was well, and I hoped the war would soon have a victorious issue. War, remarked my host, was a terrible thing. I agreed, and asked how trade in Bokhara was. Thanks to the wisdom and kindness of the Russians in bringing the railway, it was excellent (O hypocrite !). I begged that my respectful greetings might be conveyed to the Amir, with an expression of my profound regret that I had not been able to present my compliments in person. A special courier should instantly be despatched to his Highness, I was assured, to carry my message. This, I afterwards heard, was actually done, not of course for anything of the sort, but doubtless to tell him that a foreigner had arrived, that he had been summoned to the palace and entertained with food and fair words, and ascertained to be a harmless Englishman, who had duly paid homage to the great Amir. At every compliment, or whenever our eyes met, the *Khuz Begi* rose, passed his hand slowly down his beard (the conventional salaam, refusal to perform which cost poor Stoddart his life), and bowed profoundly, I of course doing the same. The scene would have been a great success on the stage, I think—at least I had to adjure my Russian companion not to laugh. As a matter of fact, it was rather a shocking farce; for he regarded me as an accursed Christian dog, thrusting my nose into places where I had no business, and was doubtless reflecting that but for those other accursed Russians he would promptly have dropped me among the sheep ticks, preparatory to letting my blood run down the gutters of the bazaar; while I certainly regarded him as an old monster, given up to the beastliest vices, and crafty and cruel and rapacious beyond words. We parted

with an outburst of compliments and affectionate assurances which deceived neither of us. This is one aspect of Eastern travel. If there were much of it, and nothing else, few people would go to the East except for trade or sword in hand.

As we were conducted down the passage I noticed hanging

THE STREET GRIMACER OF BOKHARA

near the entrance a great club and an enormous whip. The former is said to have come from Mecca, and the latter to be the whip of the immortal Rustum himself. Outside, a crowd had gathered, and an official made a way for me with his stick. In the middle a tall native was holding forth at a great rate about a young fellow in a blue tunic, who illustrated the different phases of the patter with an appalling grimace, greeted by the spectators with shouts of delighted laughter. Never have I seen such a countenance on a human being. The fellow's mouth seemed made of india-rubber, and inserting a finger of each hand into the corners he pulled and stretched it and apparently wound it round his ears and opened it till you could have inserted a good-sized melon. It was a quaint scene, as my photograph shows, proving

that the natural man finds pleasure in unnatural things, alike in Central Asia and on Epsom Downs.

High above everything else in Bokhara towers the Minar Kalan, the great tower of punishment. It is built of flat red bricks, and its graceful proportions have not suffered at all from the effects of time. At the top, as will be seen, it widens into a kind of campanile, set with oblong windows, and at its foot there is a depression which looks as if it had been scraped out of the ground. From one of these windows condemned criminals, trussed like fowls, were pushed out, and this depression is where generations of them fell. One of the last Europeans to witness the horrid sight before the Russians stopped it for ever was M. Moser, the well-known French traveller in Central Asia, who spent some time in Bokhara, but almost as a prisoner in his house, for he could not go about the city without an escort. Speaking of dull days thus spent he writes : "Comme distraction, je voyais, les jours de bazar, des paquets, jetés du haut du Manarkalan, tournoyer dans l'air."

THE TOWER OF EXECUTIONS, BOKHARA

The prison of Bokhara possesses an irresistible fascination for anybody who knows the history of Central Asia, and I fear I looked forward to visiting this more than any other place there. It was the scene of three of the most horrible and lonely martyrdoms that Englishmen have ever been called upon to suffer in the cause of Empire. The story is forgotten now, but cannot be separated from the place.

In 1840 Colonel Stoddart, of the Indian army, was sent by the British Government on a mission to Bokhara, to make certain political arrangements with the Amir Nasrullah. He was discourteously received, and appears to have acted with indiscretion. When he was requested to make the usual salaam before the Amir, he drew his sword—a gross affront, and when a message was brought to him from the Amir he is said to have replied with the Oriental insult, "Eat dung!" At any rate he was on the worst terms with the Amir, and was eventually thrown into prison. Later, Captain Arthur Conolly, also of the Indian army, a man of singular beauty of character and conspicuous piety, was despatched by the Indian Government to Khokand and Khiva, with orders to proceed afterwards to Bokhara, to place himself under the orders of Stoddart and assist the latter in any way necessary. He duly reached Bokhara, and shared Stoddart's treatment. Then darkness fell upon the fate of the two envoys. The last authentic news of them, up to September 1843, was contained in two letters from Conolly to his brother John, himself a hostage in Kabul, and told of their situation in the summer of 1842:

"For four months they had no change of raiment; their dungeon was in a most filthy and unwholesome state, and teemed with vermin to a degree that rendered life a burden. Stoddart was reduced to a skeleton, and his body was covered with putrid sores. They had, with great difficulty, prevailed upon one of their keepers to represent their wretched condition to the King, and were then awaiting his reply, having committed themselves

to God, in the full assurance that, unless soon released, death must shortly terminate their sufferings."

The British and Indian Governments—to their shame be it said, unless there were circumstances one does not know—took no steps to discover what had become of their envoys, and, indeed, placed obstacles in the way of several officers who volunteered to risk the journey to Bokhara, by forbidding them to wear their uniforms and refusing them official credentials.

At this point a quaint hero stepped forward, in the person of Joseph Wolff, D.D., LL.D. This worthy man had already lived through experiences strange enough, one would have thought, to satisfy the most adventurous. Born a Jew, he had become a Roman Catholic, turned Protestant, publicly protested against the Pope in Rome, and been escorted out of the city by twenty-five gendarmes. He joined the Church of England, studied at Cambridge, and then, with two objects, the conversion of his fellow-Jews and the discovery of the Ten Lost Tribes of the Dispersion, he had preached a defiant and polemical gospel all over the East, challenging the learned everywhere to dispute with him in many tongues. Amongst other remote and dangerous lands his missionary zeal had carried him, in 1830, even to Bokhara, where he "underwent much rigid questioning from the Goosh Bekee"—a fact eloquent enough in itself of the stuff he was made of. Then he settled down as curate of High Hoyland, in Yorkshire; but unable to pass rich on £60 a year, he had taken his wife and son to live in Bruges. With a courage not to be over-praised he decided to make the perilous attempt to rescue the two officers, the younger of whom he knew personally and greatly esteemed, or at least to place their fate beyond doubt, and in July 1843 he inserted a letter in the *Morning Herald*, addressed to all the officers of the British army, calling for companions or funds to help him in the enterprise. "I merely want," he wrote, "the expenses of my journey, and

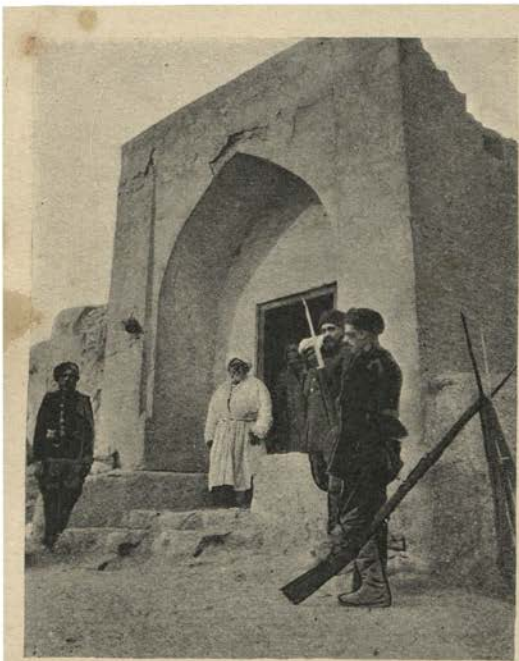
not one single farthing as a compensation, even in case of complete success." The money was found, chiefly by a Captain Grover, one of the officers to whom, as narrated above, the Government had refused official countenance; instructions were given to all British representatives on his route to afford him help; he left London on October 14, 1843; reached Bokhara

THE APPROACH TO THE PRISON, BOKHARA

after many adventures and in spite of the gravest warnings of his certain fate; was detained there a prisoner for a long time; refused to embrace Islam, and finally abandoned all hope of escaping the executioner; was only allowed to go at last in consequence of letters demanding his release being sent to the Amir by the Shah of Persia; was in such a condition when he reached English friends again in Persia that he wrote: "For five days poor Colonel Williams was engaged in putting the

vermin off my body"; and arrived back in London on April 12, 1845.*

His journey established the fact that the two men he sought to rescue had been murdered three months before he started, and also that a third British officer, Lieutenant Wyburd, had been killed by the Amir. "For the quietude of soul of the friends of those murdered officers, Colonel Stoddart and Captain Conolly," wrote Dr. Wolff, "I have to observe that they were both of them cruelly slaughtered at Bokhara, after suffering agonies from confinement in prison of the most fearful character—masses of their flesh having been gnawed off their bones by vermin—in 1843." The fate of the unhappy envoys had indeed been almost the cruellest conceivable. They had been kept long in prison, subject to every privation, their hopes being constantly raised by sham negotiations with the Amir, and several times they had been led to execution and taken back to prison. On one of these occasions they had been offered their lives if they would embrace Islam. The younger man boldly professed



THE PRISON GATE AND THE GAOLER, BOKHARA

* By a curious slip his own narrative gives the date of his start wrongly as October 1844, instead of 1843.

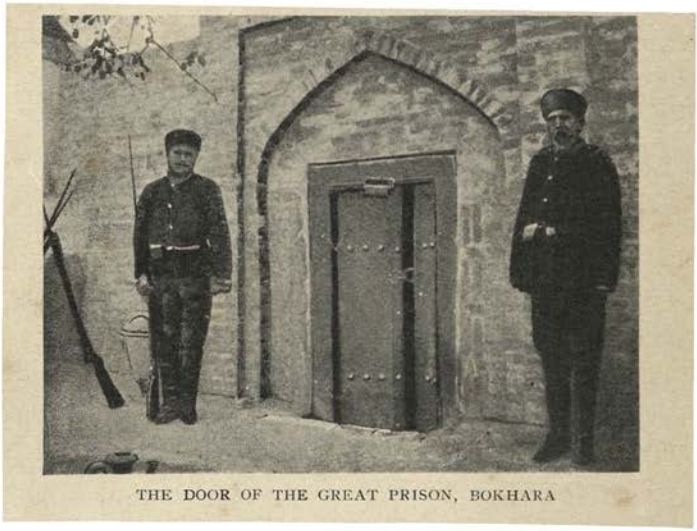
his faith in the eye of death, but in a moment of weakness, for which he needs no forgiveness, the elder apostatised. That they were confined in a dungeon-pit infested with sheep-ticks—the reader who has ever seen a sheep-tick may supply the adjectives—seems certain, though it may be a fable that these insects were fed with meat in readiness for the human prey supplied to them from time to time. At last they were taken out and their heads cut off in public, but not before Stoddart had denounced Islam and declared that he died, as he had lived, in the faith of his fathers. Of Conolly's end Dr. Wolff finely wrote: "His firm conduct at his dying hour reminds us forcibly of the bearing of those brave soldiers who died in the persecutions of Decius and Diocletian. I hope to see my Conolly among them at the hour of Christ's coming in glory."

As the British Government had done nothing to save its emissaries, so it did nothing to punish their murderer. But the Reverend Joseph Wolff was not without justification when he said: "I have given such proofs to my Jewish friends of my sincerity of belief, as I may say without boasting no other Jewish convert has yet done. Independent of this, my nation saw that the Jew was prepared to risk his life to save the Gentile." *Lecha shalom.**

All this was vividly in my memory when I set out for the old prison of Bokhara. The palace, or, as it should rather be termed, the citadel or fort, stands upon a low hill, said to be artificial, and is surrounded by a high mud-wall. Skirting

* Dr. Wolff subsequently became vicar of Isle Brewers, in Somerset, and remained there till his death. The Rev. Mr. Cole, the present vicar, courteously informs me that he is buried in the churchyard under a marble cross with this most modest inscription: "Joseph Wolff, Vicar of Isle Brewers. Born Nov. 9th, 1795. Died May 2nd, 1862. The Lord Jesus Christ was his only hope of Salvation." It is equally remarkable and regrettable that his monument bears no allusion to his life of missionary zeal, or to the act of Christian heroism which was its climax.

this, one comes at its eastern side to the foot of a mound, upon which there is a walled enclosure reached by a winding road and entered through a massive gateway of brick, now dilapidated. This is the *Zindan*, or state prison, and it faces the wall of the citadel. The gaoler came out to meet me and I shivered at the thought of those at his mercy. He was an



THE DOOR OF THE GREAT PRISON, BOKHARA

old man, very fat, with a long white beard, dressed all in white, and his cruel, leering face was an epitome of the vices. Expectation of a present made him obsequious, but from his wicked grin it was easy to guess that he would have been better pleased to receive me under quite different circumstances. For twenty-seven years, he said, he had been in charge of the prison. The square doorway admits to a kind of vaulted guard-room, in which soldiers and a few ugly natives were sitting and lounging. On the walls were plastered pieces of paper on which texts from the Koran were roughly engrossed, and below them hung a fine collection of chains and handcuffs. Beyond the guard-room was a small yard, and two sides of it were formed by the fronts of the two separate prisons—one of brick, and comparatively

new, the other of mud, low and old, below the level of the yard, its thick doors of worm-eaten wood fastened at the top by an antediluvian padlock. The door of the new prison was opened and I entered alone. It was a good-sized chamber, lighted by little barred windows near the roof, its floor covered with men. A row of them sat round the wall, for the simple reason that they were chained there, while others had spread their miserable quilts so as to fill every inch of space, and sat and lay in all sorts of attitudes to get relief for their limbs without touching their neighbours. The moment they realised that a foreigner had come, they broke out into all sorts of petitions, a dozen talking at once. Doubtless they took me for a Russian official, who could have interfered on their behalf. One poor wretch ran across and fell on his knees, seizing me by the leg and reiterating in all the Russian he knew that he was a Samarkand man, and therefore a Russian subject—"*Ya Samarkand cheloviek! Ya Samarkand cheloviek!*" It was a shocking sight, and I confess I approached the door of the old prison with misgiving. A soldier undid the padlock and stood aside for me to enter. I took one step and then stopped.

The room was almost dark, two deep steps led down into it, it was crowded with men like beasts in a pen, a stifling reek issued, and heavy chains rattled as those wearing them turned to see who was entering. For a moment I hesitated, then a thin broken voice said half reproachfully, in Russian: "Please come in—please!" and I stepped down into the inferno. The spectacle was such as one does not easily forget. The room was smaller than the other, and without any opening to the outer air except the door, and it was even more crowded. As my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom I saw that most of the inmates were chained, and others were evidently only free for the day, for behind them were the rings in the wall to which they were chained at night. Chains on the hands, chains on the feet, even chains round the necks, and some of them with

a big iron collar and chained by it to the wall. Poor, pale, haggard wretches—utterly ignorant of what might happen to them, never knowing when the door opened that it was not the executioner come to take them to the bazaar. Among them were men evidently well-to-do, for they were dressed in clothes that had once been good, and their mats had once been the clean beds of prosperous men. They were almost beyond hope;

THE HORROR OF HORRORS, BOKHARA

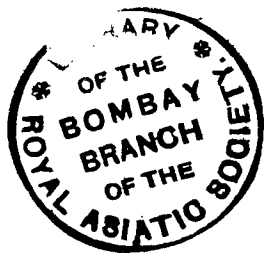
few spoke to me except to beg for bread and water; several took no notice of me whatever, but the moment the door had opened and let in a little light they had pulled copies of the Koran out of their dress and were reading it fast as long as the light lasted. One manseemed to take a sard onic satisfaction in my evident horror, for he made a way for me across the floor and invited me by gestures to enter a second chamber, through a low doorway in the wall. I remembered that the vermin-pit was said to have been within a second chamber in the old prison, so I overcame my repugnance and entered. The inner room was like the outer, but its human inmates were in even a worse state, and it is needless to dwell more on filth

and horror. The earthen floor sank in the middle—the pit that was here has been filled up.

This, then, was probably the scene of the long agony of Stoddart and the gentle Conolly. Within these very walls the two Englishmen, thinking on the spotlessness and the honour of home, on their comrades and friends, on the women who loved them and were breaking their hearts for them—or were finding consolation, if time had tried troth too high—on the Government that had sent them and had apparently washed its hands of them, starved with hunger, sickened with dirt, gnawed alive by burrowing vermin, had prayed first for life and then at last for death. But even this poignant memory could not displace the present horror. There is this truth in the Roman playwright's immortal remark, that the degradation of one human being, whether inflicted or self-procured, degrades humanity. I was haunted for weeks by the face of a man I once saw in prison who had just been flogged, and to me, who hate to see a lark in a cage or a monkey tied to an organ, the sight of all these men, with hopes and fears and affections like my own in kind, positively chained in rows, robbed of every vestige of human rights, was awful. All I could do was to buy bread for them all, and stand by till I saw they really had it, and distribute some handfuls of small coin, in the hope that it would afford a grain of alleviation of their lot. How long had most of them been there? I asked the old gaoler. Some just come in—some for years. Had they all been tried? Some had—some had not. What were they chiefly condemned to? Some to stay in prison—some to death. Would some of them be freed? The old man smiled. I knew what he meant—it depended upon whether they, or their relatives, could find money to bribe others and him. When would the condemned ones be executed? God alone knew.

If the round earth has a spot upon which hope can find no foothold, that spot would seem to be the prison of Old

Bokhara. Yet as I looked back I saw that a gipsy woman had followed me in, and that—the soldier at the gaol-door being too interested to shut it—a group of eager prisoners had gathered round the step, and she was telling their fortunes for the coppers I had given them.



CHAPTER XXI

SAMARKAND AND BEYOND

AFTER Athens, Rome, and Constantinople, I should rank Samarkand as the most interesting city in the world. A volume might be filled with descriptions of all its sights, but fortunately my photographs, which I venture to think are of unusual interest, tell the greater part of what one would wish to say. It lies 2000 feet above the sea, and is a desert of narrow streets and silent, mud-coloured houses, surrounded by an earthly paradise of fertile fields, rich vineyards, and blossoming gardens, recalling at once a certain clever imitation of Omar Khayyám—

> What though the Book you cannot understand?
> Drink while the Cup stands ready to your hand;
> Drink, and declare the summer roses blow
> As red in London as in Samarkand.

In its midst is the inevitable bazaar, crowded from morning till night by dense crowds of haggling purchasers and gossipers, through which a ceaseless stream of men and women on horses, donkeys, and camels push their way with the greatest difficulty. As in Bokhara, one section is devoted to cloth, another to silk, another to leather, another to arms, another to metal-work, and the most interesting of all to manuscripts. Here I was brought all sorts of strange volumes to buy, and although this market had been ransacked of late for rare treatises I could not help feeling that only my ignorance of their contents prevented me securing some manuscript of value. But probably my ignorance

also preserved me from less pleasant discoveries, for much of the reading matter that delights the East would produce a very different impression upon a Western mind.

It is the marvellous ruins of Samarkand, however, that give the city its extraordinary interest. Alexander the Great paused here; long afterward China made it into a great capital; then Mohammedanism, destined to conquer from China to Turkey, converted it into the best loved and most admired spot of the world. Genghiz Khan destroyed it with fire and sword in 1219, and more than a century later Timur, the lame Tartar —*Timur Leng*, whence our "Tamerlane"—anticipated the beauty and the fame of Athens here, and adorned it with the "grandest monuments of Islam," whose ruins to-day, six centuries later, are worth the long journey to the heart of Asia to see. They surround the Rigistan, or market-place, and consist of several *madrassas*, or colleges, Timur's tomb, his wife's mausoleum, and one wonderful mosque. The *madrassa*, called *Shir Dar*, or "the Lion-Bearing," from the Lion and the Sun of Persia enamelled upon it, stands on the eastern side of the great square, and that known as *Tila Kari*, or the Golden, from the gold plating with which it was once covered, on the north. To their splendour, as shown in my illustrations, must be added the effect of colour, for their façades are built of coloured tiles, among which the unequalled blue of Persia predominates. These façades are flanked with minarets of extreme grace but curiously out of the perpendicular, while within, the courtyard is surrounded with two storeys of class-rooms and students' apartments. Foreigners are not welcomed here, but I managed to make friends with the professors of one of these colleges, and after a theological discussion of the prohibition in the Koran of making pictures of the faithful, to take this photograph of a group of them.

A young student of the *madrassa*, with the Oriental's eye for

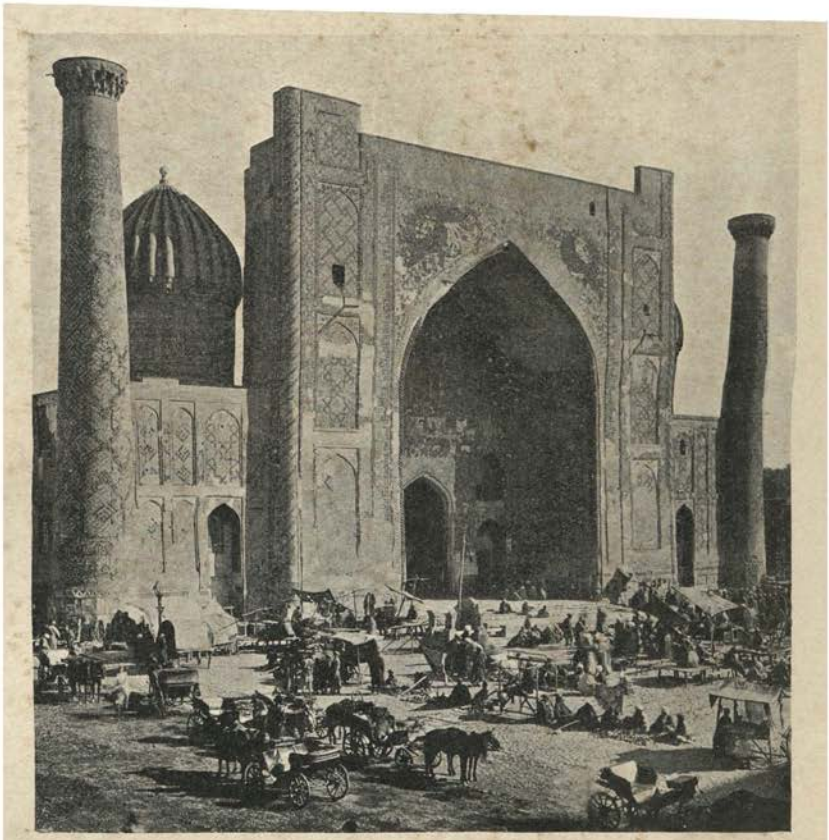
THE RIGISTAN, SAMARKAND

bakshish, volunteered to take me up to the roof, and the view of the city, combined with the recollection of its marvellous past, held me long entranced. Below was the crowded, noisy, many-

A SART OF SAMARKAND

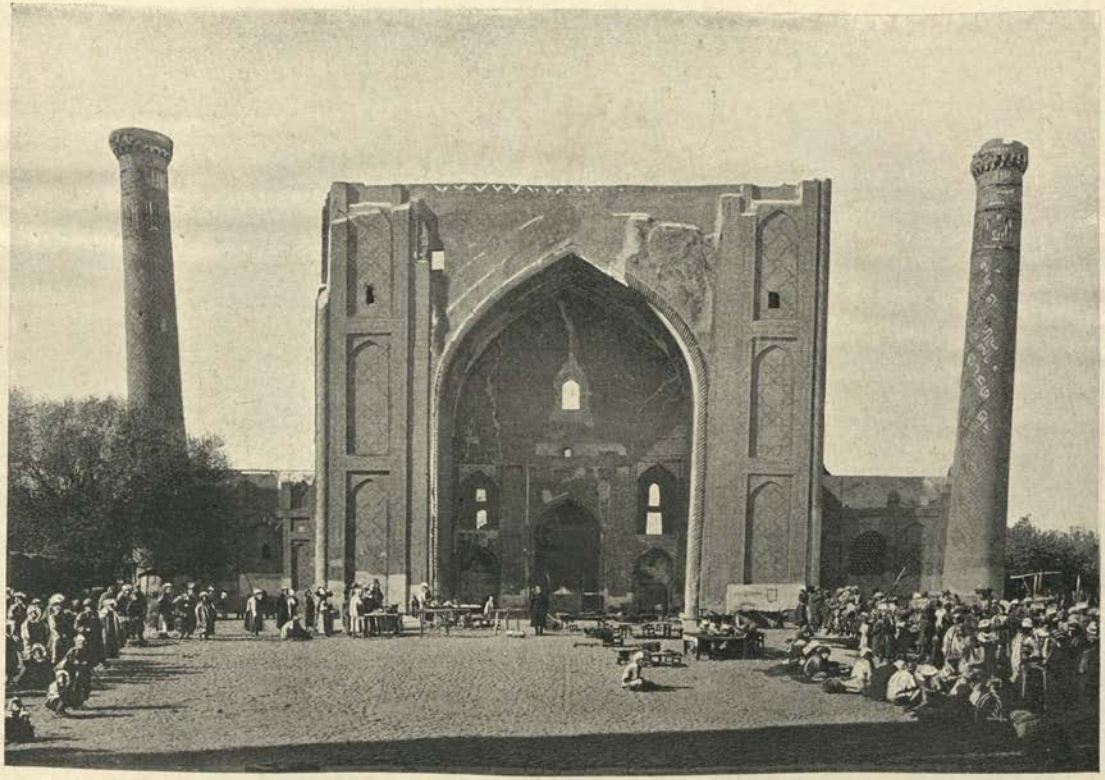
coloured market-place, enclosed by the great buildings, still magnificent in their partial ruin—the noblest public square in the world, in Lord Curzon's opinion. Beyond them the glorious domes of the mausoleums of Timur, the man who built them all, and his wife, stood high above everything else. Time and

earthquakes have wrought destruction, the portals are broken, some of the minarets are without tops, square yards of tiles have fallen off, rubbish-heaps have been formed of the *débris*, but still the magnificence of these great structures persists, and I know



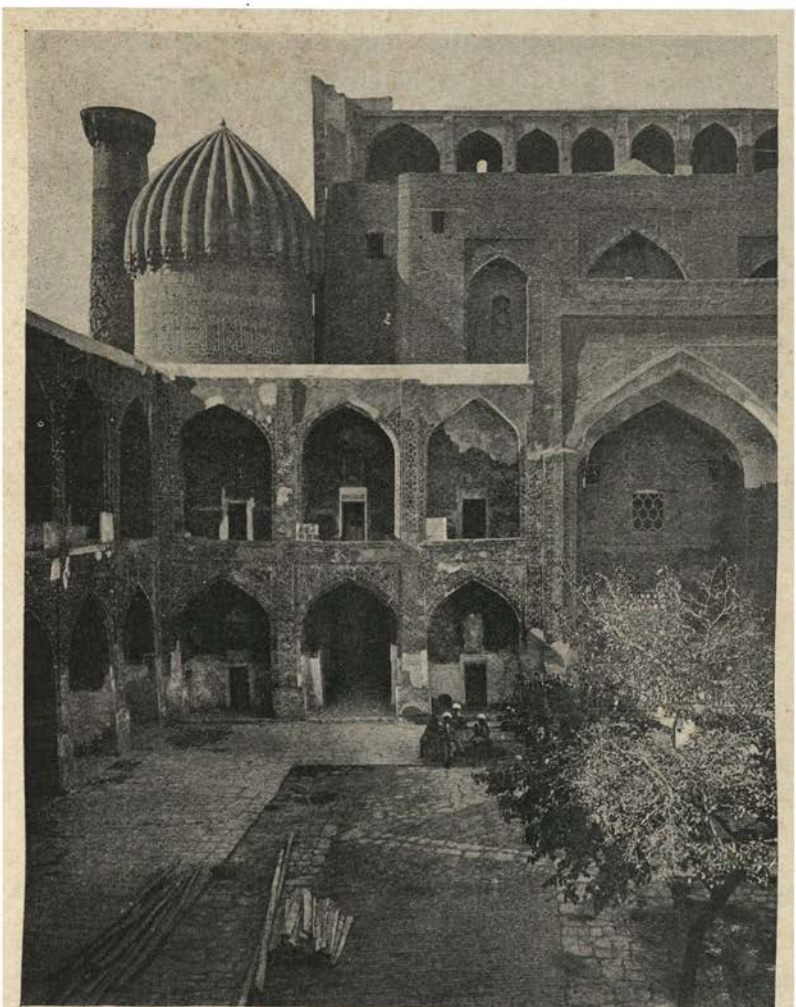
THE MADRASSA SHIR DAR, SAMARKAND

no more impressive and picturesque sight than this great market, crowded with stalls and shouting buyers and sellers, while high above and all around the human ant-heap stand these vast architectural splendours of an age long past, the note of heavenly blue dominating all. The city, flat and sombre, was ringed around



THE MADRASSA OF ULUGH BEG, SAMARKAND

with gardens and vineyards. Around these was the bare, sandy desert, rolling up into the Alai range. Behind me was the peace-



INTERIOR OF SHIR DAR, SAMARKAND

ful courtyard, surrounded by its tiers of cells for the students, with trees, and fountains, and slowly stepping, white-turbaned

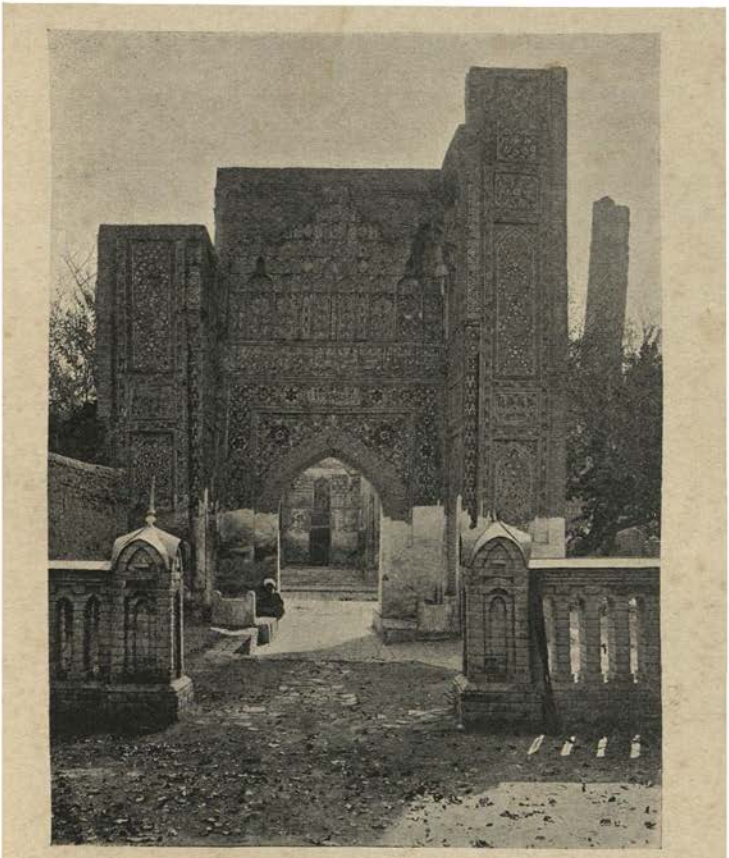
mollahs. Once this was the metropolis of the world of Islam, the home of art and poetry, the site of everything most splendid that Mohammedanism produced, the place of every Mussulman's desire, the symbol of beauty and perfection. Hafiz of Shiraz believed himself to be touching the high-water mark of hyperbole when he wrote—

> If that Turkish girl of Shiraz would give me her heart,
> I would give for one mole of her cheek Samarkand and Bokhara.

But the Uzbegs were the Goths and Vandals of this Asian Rome —the Turks of this later Athens. Finally even Bokhara took it and held it till the Russians came conquering from Tashkent. Happily Timur built his monuments so solidly that neither men nor time have destroyed them, and to-day they are assuredly still among the most glorious works of human hands.

Timur himself reposes beneath an exquisite fluted dome, flanked originally by two minarets, of which one has fallen and the other is cracked and leans dangerously. In front is an entrance portal with a Gothic arch, in blue enamel, leading to a garden shaded by alders and mulberries and weeping acacias. An aged *mollah* lives in a stone cell within the mausoleum, surrounded by paper texts copied from the decorations and tombs, which he sells to the faithful. Beneath the lofty dome, on the ground level, within a kind of palisade of pierced alabaster or gypsum, are half a dozen coffin-shaped slabs, marking the places where the bodies lie in the crypt below. One of these is an enormous block of dark-green jade, almost black, said to be the largest in the world, bearing the name of the Amir Timur himself, and the date of his death in Mohammedan chronology—A.D. 1405. Another block is commemorative of his grandson, Ulugh Beg, the famous astronomer. In a recess, below a pierced stone window, hangs a flag, surmounted by a horse-tail—the

symbol of fighting Mohammedanism. When you have gazed upon these the old *mollah* lights a guttering candle and leads you down a narrow flight of marble steps to the crypt, where the

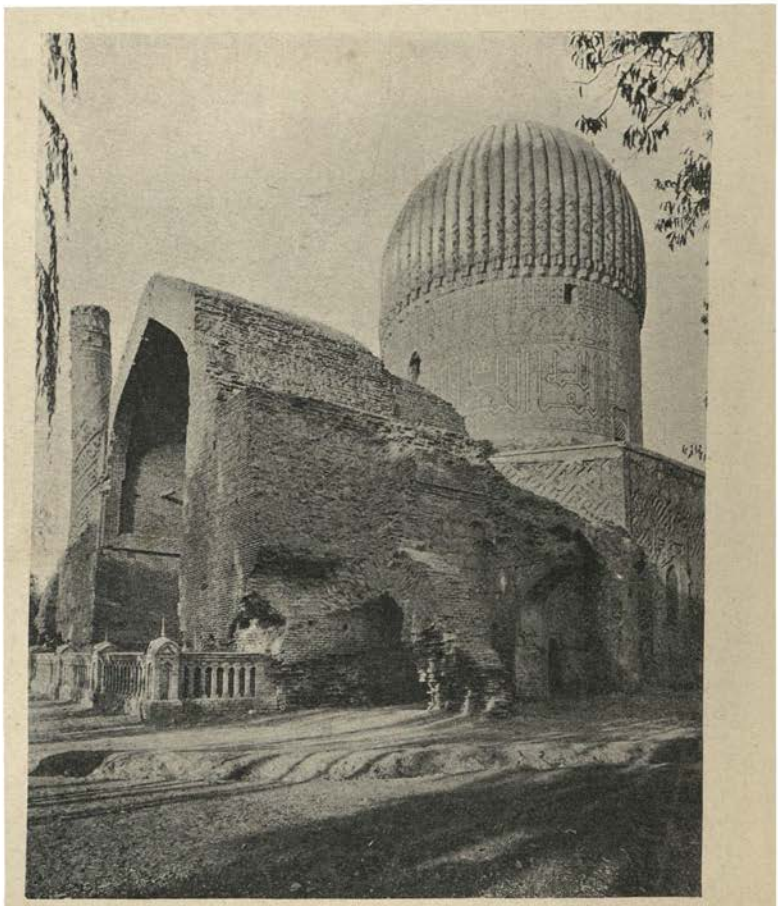


PORTAL OF THE TOMB OF TAMERLANE, SAMARKAND

mighty conqueror lies beneath a single stone—one of the world's greatest dead, whose armies ranged victorious over more than even Russia rules to-day.

Not less impressive than his own tomb, and probably more beautiful before it fell into hopeless decay, is the mausoleum of

Bibi Khanum, his wife, the daughter of the Emperor of China. One traveller speaks of it as "*le plus beau monument qui ait jamais été élevé à la mémoire d'une femme adorée*," and if one

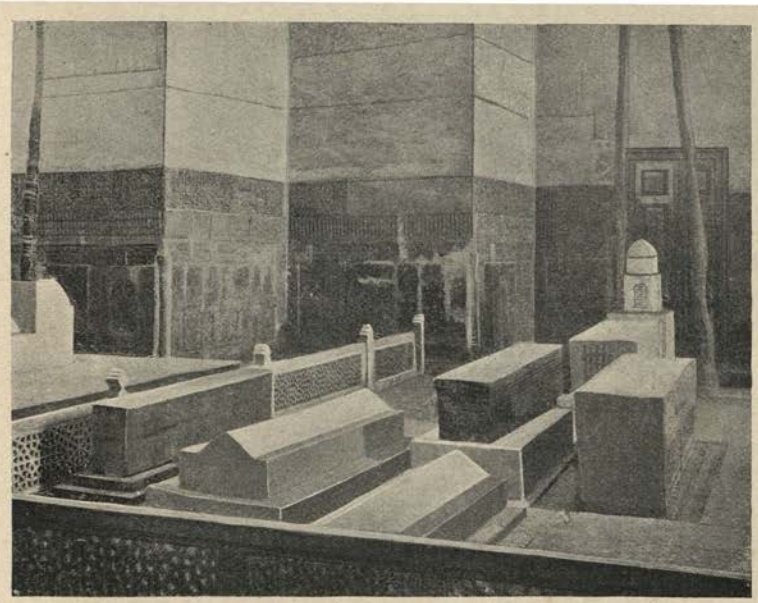


THE TOMB OF TAMERLANE, SAMARKAND

did not remember the Tâj Mahal at Agra one might accept the enthusiastic verdict. Its colossal and sweeping portal is now but a ruined arch, and its magnificent and towering dome, once gorgeous in red and green and gold, is rent across and must

soon fall. But time and neglect have failed to make any impression upon one thing—the enormous marble lectern in the courtyard, which used, it is said, to hold a Koran of corresponding proportions read by Bibi Khanum herself from an upper window.

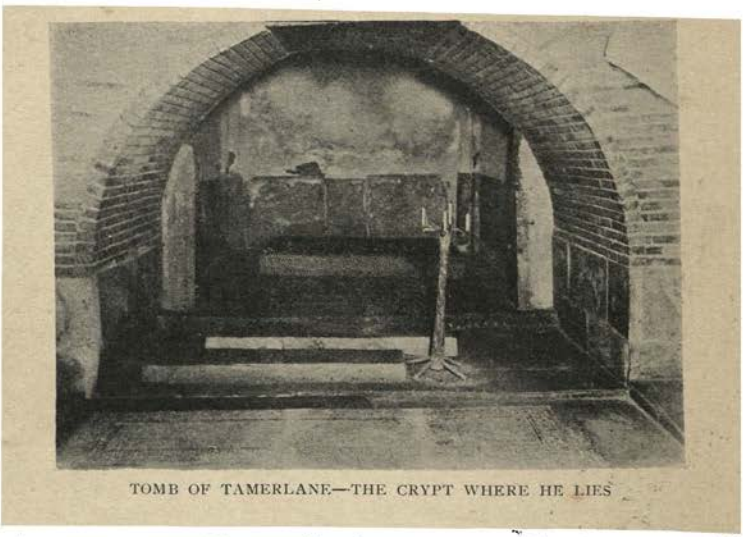
Most impressive of all, however, to my way of thinking, is the



THE TOMB OF TAMERLANE—THE UPPER CHAMBER

mosque of the Shah Zindah, or "Living Saint," a martyred saint of Islam, who is to arise again in the hour of the triumph of his faith. You enter it through a blue and white-tiled gateway, and pass by a marble stair between a double row of tombs of Timur's relatives and generals. To the left, when I visited it, the very sacred mosque was crowded with kneeling worshippers, all bowing together like a wave as the leading *mollah* chanted the *credo* of Islam. If I caught the deep rolling alliterative syllables aright, they were the sacred words which Mohammed saw in letters of

fire on the tiara of Gabriel, since that day the profession of the most fanatical—"God, and nothing but God, and Mohammed the Prophet of God." Then through a long narrow corridor to the entrance of the inner mosque, on the threshold of which a *mollah* was devoutly praying, with its huge inscription, "God is Great," and a green text from Mecca, a carved wooden pulpit,



TOMB OF TAMERLANE—THE CRYPT WHERE HE LIES

and an enormous Koran, five feet square. Then across padded carpets to the inner sanctuary, where, behind a pierced stone screen, old green flags hang, and a faint candle shows the deep stone-built hole where the Saint awaits the joyful news of the final triumph of Islam. Beside the screen is a heavy little wooden door, leading to the vault below, and fastened with a most quaint padlock. "That has never been unlocked since the Saint entered the earth, twelve hundred and fifty-nine years ago," said the *mollah* who was conducting me—with a fine disregard, it must be confessed, of historical accuracy, for that would place the date about six hundred years before the birth of Timur himself, who built the mosque. This spot, however, does not need the aid of pious fiction, and through these narrow

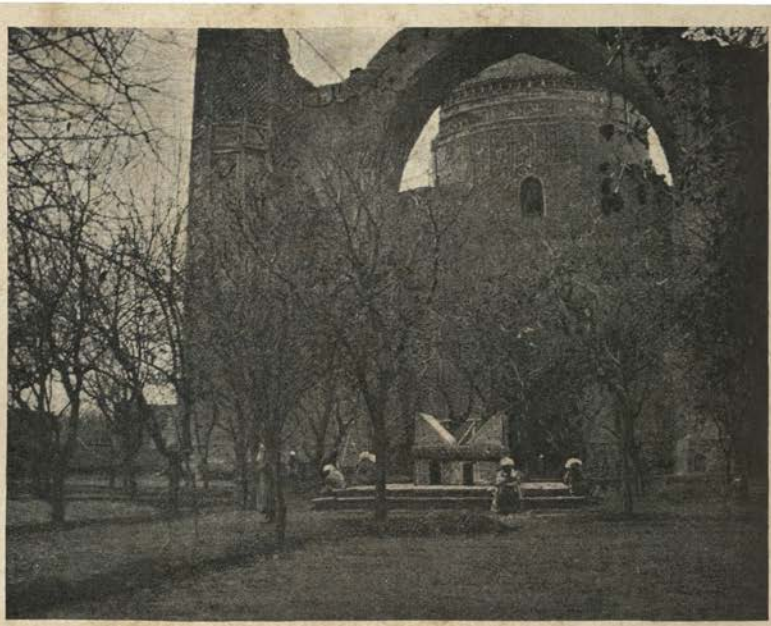
ways and gates and prayer-chambers one walked in silence, for everywhere worshippers were prostrating themselves in deep devotion, and in the innermost room one peered down into the deep and black tomb where the Saint lies until that day, feeling that one was in truth in a place sanctified by the solemn homage of ages of devout men.

One word must be added here in criticism of the Russian authorities. They are apparently oblivious of the sacred responsibility imposed upon them by the possession of these unique monuments of a glorious past. Some rough repairs of common plaster have been made in the walls and dome of the tomb of Timur—and, indeed, it would be a crime to allow so memorable a spot to fall into decay—but, on the whole, the Russians have done almost nothing to keep these splendid structures intact. They do strictly forbid the selling of the blue tiles, but thirty years after they came here an earthquake wrought destruction, and the piles of brick, and mortar, and smashed tiles lie just as they fell. One of the most beautiful domes of Samarkand, that of the Mosque of Bibi Khanum herself, the great Amir's consort, has a huge open rift across it, and may collapse at any moment. The cost of preservation would not be great, and it is surprising that some archæological society in Russia does not undertake the task which the Government thus strangely neglects.*

As Samarkand and all the surrounding country is Russian territory, and as the commerce of the place is important and rapidly growing, the Russian town—which, as in the case of

* Since I wrote the above the following lamentable confirmation of this neglect has been telegraphed from St. Petersburg to the *Daily Chronicle* :—"The tomb of the great Asiatic conqueror Tamerlane was plundered last month in Samarkand. The robbers not only broke the valuable memorial tablet that was on the tomb under the cupola of the great mosque, where the conqueror is buried, but they also took away many other valuables belonging to the mosque, which seems to be practically unguarded, notwithstanding it contains some of the most valuable inscriptions in Asia."

Bokhara, is at some distance from the native one—is already of considerable extent and importance. The Governor's residence is large and spacious—indeed, somewhat extravagantly so—set in the middle of a square-walled garden of several acres. The official departments are numerous and well housed, and there is an admirable school, on an astonishingly large scale, for the



MAUSOLEUM OF BIBI KHANUM

children of the civil servants and Russian residents. The shops are not like those in Siberia, but all ordinary supplies may be purchased. The town reminded me of some American cities in the West, being laid out like a chessboard, with wide streets planted with trees. It is evident that the Russians foresaw from the beginning the possibilities of the place, and that they allowed room for the development that is sure to come. The mountainous districts around are believed to contain valuable minerals in enormous quantities, and it is said that a great coal-bed has been

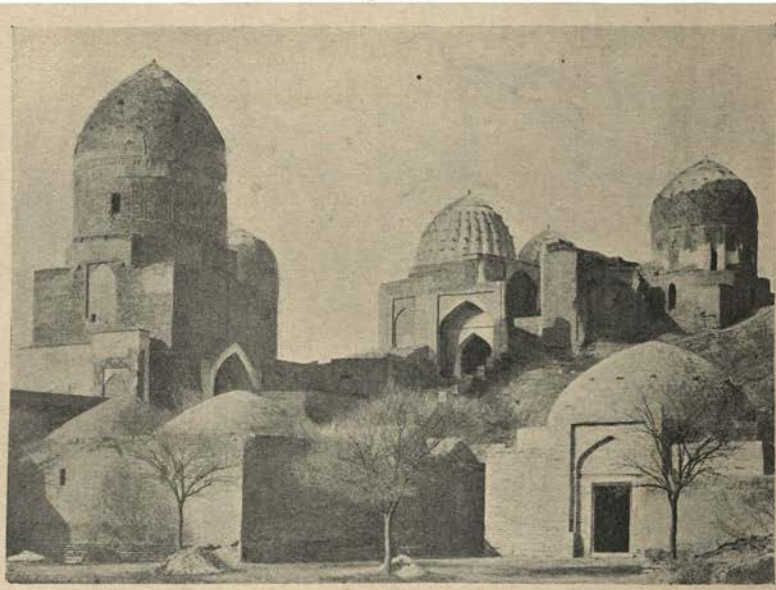
discovered. The natives are industrious, and weave Moscow yarn into stuffs which have a large local sale; many thousands of acres are planted with vines, producing wine and raisins; and the industry of distilling *eau-de-vie de vin* has sprung up and is growing fast.

It is curious, as I have already remarked, that in such

TOMB OF BIBI KHANUM

thriving foreign settlements there is nothing like an hotel. The nearest approach is what are called *Nomera*, houses let out in furnished rooms, in which you can get a cup of coffee in the morning and nothing else that you can eat. On the other hand, the military casino, or club, is a fine building, with dining-rooms, billiard-room, library, and a truly magnificent ball-room, and private theatre. Unless the traveller has the *entrée* to this, he is very badly off in Samarkand. At Tashkent I was formally introduced by a courteous acquaintance, but here I knew nobody, as the Governor did not trouble to acknowledge the letter of introduction I left at his residence from his immediate superior, the Governor-General of Turkestan. This, by the way, and the

action of the Chief of Police of Askhabad, of which I have already spoken, were the only two occasions during my whole journey in the Tsar's dominions when I was not treated with the utmost courtesy and consideration, and when every effort was not made to enable me to see everything and learn everything that I desired. I gladly take this opportunity to return my cordial

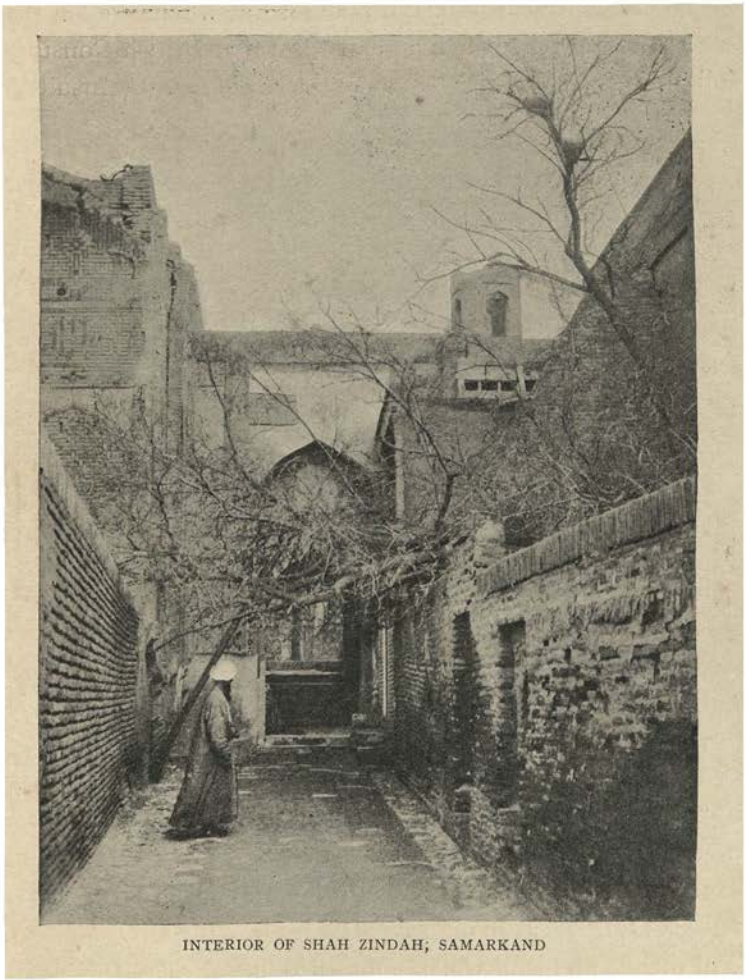


MAUSOLEUM AND MOSQUE OF SHAH ZINDAH

thanks, and to say that nowhere in the world could a visiting foreigner have pursued his way under happier conditions. But this reference to the club at Samarkand reminds me of a story.

As I have said, I knew nobody, and the club was the only place in the foreign settlement where a decent meal could be had. So, with my interpreter, a young Russian gentleman who accompanied me everywhere, I made bold to call at the club, ask for the name of any officer who happened to be present, and when a lieutenant who was playing billiards came out, to ex-

plain to him who I was and what was my plight, and to beg that I might be permitted to use the club during my short stay. Like every Russian, he was the soul of courtesy when courte-



INTERIOR OF SHAH ZINDAH, SAMARKAND

ously approached, and he at once sought another officer on the premises to be my supporter, and our two names were entered as guests on the spot. This is one example of many such acts of friendly politeness. Now for the story—which shows another

side of foreign life in Russia. It was during the Boer War, when things were not going well for us in South Africa, and anti-British feeling ran very high in Russia and the newspapers served up a daily hash of denunciations and lies manufactured in Brussels. Things reached such a pass at last that British Consuls, in full uniform, on official occasions, were deliberately insulted in

THE HOUR OF PRAYER, SAMARKAND

public by Russian officials of high rank. With the timidity that has characterised it during the past five years, the British Foreign Office, instead of officially taking up these insults and thus bringing them to an instant stop, ordered all our Consuls to absent themselves on public occasions. This order was the result of an exceedingly gross insult offered to our Consul in Moscow by a Russian General at an official party given by the Governor-General there—an insult which compelled him to rise, seek his wife at another table, proceed to the table where the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess were sitting at supper, make his bows, and withdraw, the most marked action that a foreigner could possibly take in the presence of Russian royalty. This, however,

is not the story, which contains one of the most finished diplomatic replies I have ever heard of. A British Consul-General, with a military title from having served in a famous Highland regiment, was dining in full uniform at an official party on a State occasion about this time. He was seated at a table with a distinguished company, including a prince and princess. While

THE AVENUE OF ANDIJAN

they were talking, a well-known Russian General, covered with decorations, walked across from another table, his glass in his hand, and holding it before the face of the British Consul-General, exclaimed, "*Je bois à la santé des braves Boërs!*" It was a moment that would have tested the most experienced diplomacy. But the Scotsman was equal to it. The insult was deliberate and gross; moreover, it was official, and the Consul would have been wholly within his rights if he had treated it as such, left the room, reported it to his Ambassador, and demanded an apology. This,

however, in the circumstances, and considering the relations of the two countries, would have been a blunder, and the Foreign Office, while it would have been compelled to take up his case,

THE NATIVE POLICEMAN OF ANDIJAN

would have regarded him as a tactless mischief-maker. Still, some reply had to be made on the spot, and a dignified one. The Consul-General rose instantly, with perfect self-control ignored the intended affront, and touching his glass to the General's, responded, "*Aux braves de toutes les nations, mon*

Général!" It would be difficult to beat that reply, and the Russians themselves were loud in their praises of such consummate tact. The man who made it was severely wounded by a Boer shell not long afterward.

Beyond Samarkand, along the eastern branch of the Trans-Caspian to its terminus at Andijan, lies the cotton country of Turkestan. The towns themselves—Khodjent, Kokand, Margelan (the administrative capital of Fergana), and Andijan—are on a smaller scale like those I have described, Kokand with a past, Margelan with a present of greater importance. Nothing in them calls for additional remark, except cotton. Where there is no water, or no system of irrigation, desolation reigns. I remember well how the train stopped, late one afternoon, at a station in the middle of the desert. Not a house or a leaf was in sight. A few dogs were prowling about, an old man on a camel was just starting across the trackless sand, and a long-bearded Sart was delighting the Russian station-master's little son by setting him upon his ass. A hundred yards from the station were seven graves in the sand, each with a rough wooden cross above it, and by the sight of the station-master himself, thin, pale, bent, with crooked knees, I judged there would soon be eight. Given water, and the scene changes to fat fields, cosy dwellings, blooming gardens, prosperous natives, and mountains of bales of cotton awaiting transport.

The cotton-land is the property of those natives who were in occupation of it when the Russians came, and every effort is wisely made to keep it in their hands. Before they can sell, they must procure the written permission of three *Kazis*, or native judges, and then the Russian Chief of the District can either give or withhold his consent to the transaction, and in any case he only gives permission when none of the native neighbours wish to purchase. The land-tax is based upon a quin-

quennial classification according to crop, and its maximum is 6 roubles per *dessiatina* (2.7 acres*) for cotton-land, and 7½ roubles for rice-land. That which pays 7½ roubles is sold at about 500 roubles the *dessiatina*—about £20 an acre. Land bought twelve years ago for 17 roubles is to-day worth 300,

PACKING COTTON IN ANDIJAN

which explains the prosperity of some of the older cotton companies. In Fergana the crop averages 60 pouds—rather less than a ton—of raw cotton to the *dessiatina*, or about 800 lb. to the acre; at Merv, 50 pouds, and at Tashkent, 30 pouds. Ten years ago a Sart labourer was paid 17 kopecks a day; now he receives from sixty to seventy. The buyers make an advance upon the crop in February or March, and the harvest is in September and October; but this system has the obvious disadvantage that the

* Murray's "Handbook to Russia" (5th ed. p. [65]) gives one *dessiatina* as equal to 28.6 acres!

natives, being sure of their money, take less pains with the crop. Several Americans have visited Fergana lately, with a view to the investment of capital. One, who had left three weeks before my visit, had offered to irrigate over 450,000 acres of the terrible so-called "Famine Steppe," from the water of the Syr-Darya, on condition that he should be allowed to let the land along the canal to natives for a hundred years, at a rent to be agreed upon between the Government and himself, the irrigation works to be the property of the Government at the expiration of that period. Two others were proposing to erect presses to produce cotton-seed oil and cotton-cake. Cotton has been rather unlucky lately in this district. First of all, when the price of grain once rose, the natives all hastened to put their land under grain, instead of cotton, with the natural result that they lost heavily. Then the revolt caused much land to go out of cultivation for a time. This year locusts have done great damage. But the future of Turkestan as a cotton-growing country is assured, and the time will come when Russia will realise her ideal of finding in her own territory, beyond the Caspian, all the cotton needed by her mills in Europe and those which will be built in the Caucasus. Spinning-mills at Baku, I may add, will be highly profitable enterprises, for on the one hand they will save the cost of transport of the raw material to Central Russia and of the finished article back again, and on the other the markets of Asia will be at their door.

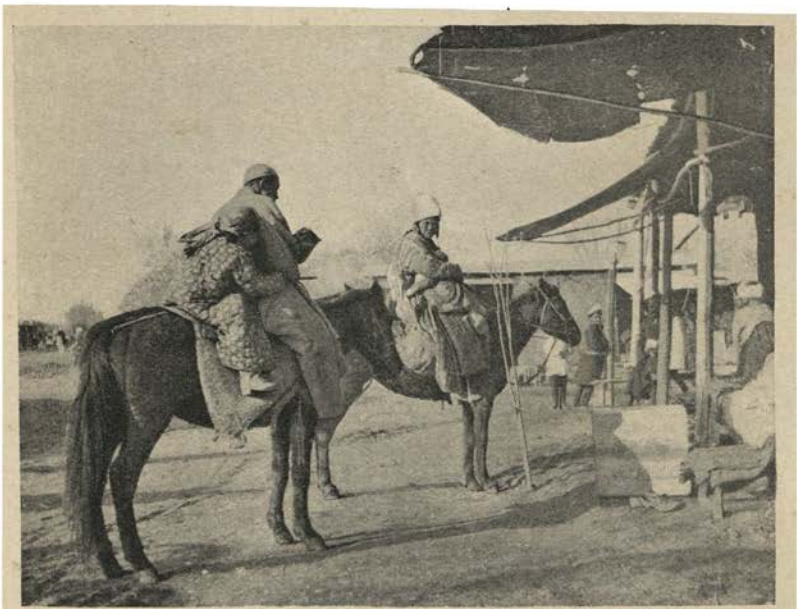
I wished to see what Russian Central Asia looked like beyond the railway, so, after a couple of days spent at Andijan, its terminus, I drove fifty versts to Osh, the last Russian town before the Chinese frontier is reached, and the starting-place for the great passes leading into Kashgar. The first village on the road is curiously called Khartum, and I had not gone far before I was struck with the busy and prosperous life here on the very out-

skirts of Russia's territory. Every few yards on the road I met or passed mounted men, often two on a horse, or an *arba*—the high-wheeled carts of my illustration, for fording rivers without wetting their loads—piled with sacks of grain or cotton-seed or hay, or filled full of veiled women and pretty children,

THE ENTRANCE TO OSH

the driver sitting astride the horse in the shafts. One charming figure went by—a young man, lightly dressed to run, on his fist a yellow hawk, not hooded, but tied by a string to its leg, ready to be cast off. And a Kirghiz family party, out shopping, pleased me greatly. The man was on one horse, with a little son perched behind him, his arms round his father's waist and his legs wide-stretched almost to splitting point. The woman was astride of another horse, with a baby before her, and she looked gay in her

scarlet cotton gown and white hood, and masses of jingling metal ornaments. On her flat face, of the colour of terra-cotta, could be read the struggle between modesty and intense curiosity as I approached. Finally the latter conquered, and



A KIRGHIZ FAMILY SHOPPING IN OSH

we had a good look at each other till her husband perceived her fall, and angrily drove her away.

The road ran between wide cotton-fields, their tiny canals, planted on either side with pollard willows. Just before the town, at a wayside tea-house, there was a little mosque with its minaret, whence the faithful were called to prayers, in the fork of a high tree, and, as I drove into the first street, I saw two haystacks apparently coming toward me and filling the road from side to side. These turned out to be enormously laden donkeys, with nothing but their noses and hoofs visible. Then two miles of deeply rutted roads, between thick earthen houses, their flat

roofs bearing great heaps of maize-straw, millet-sheaves, and green hay, brought me to the centre of the town, where a crowd of natives, their horses tethered in a long row against the wall, were gathered in front of the *Uyesdnoye Pravlenye*, the office of the Russian administrator, and the post-office. Osh is remark-

A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER OF OSH AND THEIR HOME

able for a number of high-walled enclosures, with huge wooden gates. At first I thought they were old forts of some kind, but they turned out to be for droves of horses and cattle. And the number of *chaihannas*, open tea-houses, all well patronised, and singularly picturesque at night when white-turbaned groups gather round the blazing fire, show that the people of Osh are what the Germans call *gemüthlich*. Nevertheless they often cast black looks at the foreigner, and a man ran at me with a horse-whip while I was taking one of these photographs. But the little girls cheerily cried, *Salaam aleikum!*

A magnificent, mile-long avenue of silver beeches leads to

the Governor's residence, on a hillside overlooking the town and a brown range of mountains. The guardian of this outpost is Colonel Zaïtzef, the frequent host of Dr. Sven Hedin during the pauses of his splendid explorations in this part of the world, and I found him feeling much kindly anxiety about a piano he had undertaken to see safely on its way to Mr. Macartney, the British Resident at Kashgar, which had gone astray somewhere between here and the Caspian. On my homeward journey I was fortunate enough to discover it and get it sent forward—a fact which would doubtless be made known at once in Kashgar, as a telegraph-line runs from here *viâ* Vernoye.

"OSH AND NO MISTAKE"—THE END OF MY JOURNEY

I do not think that Osh will long remain a Russian outpost. Kashgaria is weakly held by China; the rule of the local Chinese officials is barbarous, and taxes are collected by torture when other methods fail; great discontent, therefore, reigns; and Russia has within her borders, and under her hand, Mohammedan refugees who could be slipped like hounds to raise rebellion. The British Resident is compelled, by the deliberate withholding of support from home—going so far as to forbid him to wear a uniform—to play a minor *rôle*, while his Russian colleague is almost master in the place. Nor do I see that an arrangement which gave Kashgaria and Kulja—for the latter would inevitably follow the former—to Russia, need raise any objections in England. It is her natural line of expansion; it is out of any possible sphere of ours; and it would substitute civilisation for

extortion and cruelty. For my last word about Central Asia must be—and it was the dominant thought in my mind as I deciphered the faded word "Osh" on the official boundary-post and realised that I had reached the end of my long journey—that Russia has destroyed nothing there—except the Turkoman horse and the Turkoman carpet—that was of any value, and that she has brought peace, prosperity, and probably quite as much liberty as is good for those who enjoy it.

CHAPTER XXII

M. DE WITTE AND HIS POLICY

FROM the unique and impressive spectacle of absolute autocracy; from the docile, childlike masses of the people; from the vastness of Siberia, slowly awaking to consciousness and productivity under the stimulus of a railway which links Moscow to the China Sea; from the beauty and Babel of the Caucasus; from the conquest and annexation of the proud peoples and historic cities of Central Asia—I turn to a wholly different aspect of the Russia of to-day. No romantic story introduces it; no clash of arms or diplomatic intrigue echoes through it; the camera affords it but one single illustration—the portrait of a man. To my thinking, however, it exhibits the most wonderful Russia of all.

"The Russian State is by far the greatest economic unit on the face of the globe."* To ninety-nine readers out of a hundred this statement will doubtless be startling. It certainly was to me when I first met with it, yet the facts to justify it are not far to seek. The Russian State draws an annual net profit of 45,000,000 roubles from its forests, mines, and agricultural property. It receives annually 80,000,000 roubles (minus considerable arrears) from its communities of ex-serfs for the use of land it ceded to or purchased for them. It is building the longest and most costly railway in the world, and it owns and

* For this phrase, and for many of the statistical facts which follow, I am indebted to the Russian *Journal of Financial Statistics*, an admirable periodical presentation of figures and explanations dealing with every side of Russian economic and financial activity. Although a semi-official publication, the statistics given in the *Journal* are absolutely trustworthy.

works over 24,000 miles of railways, the net revenue on which is equal to one-seventh of the net revenue of all the railways of the United States.

In 1898 it received £180,000,000 into its coffers, nearly one-half of which sum was not produced by taxation. Its budget is greater than that of France by more than £40,000,000.

In 1890, when one of the banks of London was unable to meet its obligations, the Russian Government had with it on current account a balance of so many millions of pounds that when the Bank of England came to the rescue a request was immediately made to Russia not to dispose of her balance before a certain date, since to do so would be to precipitate a financial crisis of the utmost gravity. Finally, besides being a capitalist and a banker of this magnitude, the Russian State is also a metallurgist and a spirit merchant. In a word, the proud claim is made for it that it is the greatest land-owner, the greatest capitalist, the greatest constructor of railways, and carries on the largest business in the world. This is the aspect of contemporary Russia to which I now turn. I need hardly add that it can be but a brief consideration of a great and complex subject.

To some people statistics offer the liveliest interest; to most they are dull and soporific. Therefore I do not wish to fill my space with tabulated figures, and fortunately an easy way of escape presents itself. Economic, industrial, and commercial Russia of to-day is, in a large degree, the work of one living statesman, and in his convictions and his activity its direction is incarnate. This man is Monsieur de Witte, Minister of Finance, and his career is in many chapters of the story of how modern Russia, in this aspect, came to be what she is. Few people who know him well would dispute the opinion that he is perhaps the ablest and most far-seeing statesman in Europe to-day, and it is doubtful if any other exercises so great an influence as he upon the course of events. Outside Russia, however, and the higher

circles of diplomacy and finance, he is comparatively little known, and not much that is accurate has ever been written about him. From every point of view, therefore, his story is worth telling, but I must preface it by the remark that in no way whatever, directly or indirectly, is any word here due to his inspiration, or has even any suggestion upon the subject ever been made by him to me. I have had the honour of conversing with M. de Witte on a good many occasions, but all that follows here is my personal view, and the sole responsibility for it is my own. When this sketch of his career appeared in its original form I sent him a copy of it. At our next meeting he thanked me formally, but neither then, nor at any subsequent time, did he make one word of comment upon it.

Serge Julievich Witte was born in 1849, in the Caucasus, where his father, of German descent, was Director of State Domains. His mother, *née* Fadayef, was the daughter of the Governor of Saratof under the Emperor Nicholas, and of a Princess Dolgoruki, one of the oldest and best-known Russian noble families. His first studies were pursued at the *Gymnasium* of Tiflis, which must have been a very strange place forty years ago, with its extraordinary mixtures of Georgians, Armenians, Circassians, Persians, and the like, all much more strongly marked with their national characteristics than they are in the same city to-day. To such an environment in early youth M. de Witte's wide outlook in after-life may probably be traced. From Tiflis he passed to the University of Odessa, where it is said he presented Georgian as the "foreign language" necessary to his graduation in 1870, thus compelling the faculty to import a professor of Georgian to examine him. Like many another, he found in journalism the ladder to public life, M. Katkof, the well-known editor of the Moscow *Viedomosti*, being first his pattern and afterward his chief, whom he supported enthusiastically in more

than one of his hard-fought campaigns for a new ideal of Russian patriotism. He was also a collaborator of the once famous Aksakof.

M. de Witte's first post was a modest one in the service of the Odessa Railway, which at that time belonged to the State. He rose steadily from one grade to another, and his personal qualities were so highly esteemed that the municipality of Odessa elected him to the post of honorary magistrate, a kind of judicial arbitrator to whose decision both parties in a dispute can agree to refer the issue between them. At this time, too, the Odessa Railway, together with other adjoining lines, was conceded by the State to private enterprise, and the whole, amounting to 2000 miles of road, formed into the important South-West Railway Company, of which M. de Witte, who had attracted favourable official notice by a work upon the principles of a universal railway tariff, ultimately adopted throughout Russia, became general manager after ten years of service. During the Russo-Turkish War he also greatly distinguished himself by administrative skill and energy in forwarding troops and supplies to the front.

In 1887 M. Bunge, Minister of Finance, resigned this office, and was succeeded by M. Vishnegradski, a man of great natural gifts and greater acquired knowledge. He had been for several years president of the South-West Railway and other important companies, and being, therefore, intimately acquainted with M. de Witte's career and capabilities, one of his first acts was to offer the latter a post in the Ministry of Finance. M. de Witte declined this, not unnaturally preferring his own independent position, but a dramatic incident which occurred soon afterward led him inevitably to St. Petersburg. As manager of the South-West Railway it was his duty to supervise the arrangements of the Imperial train. In spite of his energetic warnings these were so made as to result in the terrible catastrophe at Borki, when the Tsar, the Tsaritsa, and their children narrowly escaped death.

M. de Witte's action in this connection recommended him so strongly to the Tsar that soon afterward M. Vishnegradski's repeated invitation was backed by an Imperial command, and

HIS EXCELLENCY M. DE WITTE, MINISTER OF FINANCE

he accepted the post of Director of Railways, specially created for him. In March 1892 he was appointed by the Emperor Minister of Ways of Communication; during M. Vishnegradski's long illness he undertook the duties of the Finance Department; and when the latter was compelled in August to retire from public

life, M. de Witte was appointed, provisionally at first, and afterward formally, Minister of Finance. This was in January 1893, and consequently by his own unaided ability he had reached the highest administrative post in the Russian Empire at the age of forty-four. In the very same year he fought the great tariff war with Germany, and showed the world once for all that he could handle colossal issues of national finance with the utmost hardihood, and that, having once entered upon a struggle, he would stop at nothing to bring it to a successful conclusion. Since that time his high-tariff neighbours have taken care to give him no ground for reprisals.

The key to M. de Witte's economic views may be found in the fact that at an early period of his career he published a work entitled "The Political Economy of Friedrich List." The latter (1789–1846, "the politico-economic Messiah of two worlds") was an apostle of what may be called "educational protection," and this has been throughout his life, as it still remains, the fundamental principle of M. de Witte's economic statesmanship. Such a principle assuredly needs no explanation or comment for American readers at any rate, to whom it must be familiar alike in theory and in practice. M. de Witte's statesmanship has been directed, up to the present time, to four ends, of which this educational protection is the first and chief. A brief experiment he made, but dropped as soon as wider knowledge showed it to be unsound, may be just mentioned for the sake of contrast. He began with a belief in "rag-baby" currency—the issue of assignats, irredeemable paper money, for the payment of the cost of public works. Of this nothing more need be said than that the greatest achievement of his public life has been won in precisely the reverse direction. The second subject to which he turned his attention was the fluctuation in exchange of the gold price of the rouble. These fluctuations seem almost incredible to-day, in view of the stability now so firmly established. In

February 1888 the rouble was quoted in London at 19 pence; in September 1890 it sprang suddenly to 31 pence; by December 1891 it had fallen to 21 pence. Between 1877 and 1896 the highest and lowest rates in London and New York, respectively, were 2*s.* 9*d.* and 1*s.* 7*d.*, and 67 cents and 38⅔ cents. The most unscrupulous gambling took place upon the Berlin bourse. In 1891 the hundred-rouble note had actually been quoted at rates varying from 245.10 marks to 191.50 marks. Financial reform, or indeed any important financial operation, was almost impossible to a country whose currency was thus the sport of the money-gamblers, so M. de Witte resolved to strike, and—perhaps remembering what the tariff war with Germany had cost him—at Berlin. So he struck, with his accustomed boldness, straight from the shoulder. It was decided that from January 1, 1894, to December 31, 1895, the gold price of the hundred-rouble note should not fall below 216 marks, and Berlin was informed that as many paper roubles as she cared to sell would be bought at that rate. Berlin sold gaily for eight months, and M. de Witte bought; then, when the final time for delivery came, her speculators had to go upon their knees to the Russian Minister of Finance and beg him of his mercy not utterly to ruin them all. He consented to let them off easily, and there has been no gambling in the rouble since. The Russian statistical historian remembers that not long ago an empty space used to be pointed out in the Berlin Stock Exchange, and questioners were told, "That is where speculators in the rouble stood." *Campi ubi Troja fuit.*

The rouble being thus placed upon a stable basis of exchange, the next step was obviously to the gold standard, and this supreme reform constitutes the third of M. de Witte's aims. The policy which had stopped the gambling at Berlin was continued till November 1897, by which time experience had shown conclusively that the resources of the Russian treasury were sufficient to enable it to announce definitively that payments would

henceforth be made in gold specie, and by an Imperial *ukaz* of November 14, 1897, every rouble note was made to bear upon its face an undertaking to that effect. The most remarkable fact about this resumption of specie payments is the enormous contraction of paper money by which it was accompanied. On January 1, 1892, the amount of paper roubles issued was 1,121,000,000; to-day it is 630,000,000. That is, over £52,000,000 of paper money was withdrawn from circulation, the public being literally compelled to take gold. And what makes this enormous contraction the more remarkable, if not indeed unique, is that as in Russia the State alone issues paper money, these notes were not withdrawn in one form to be reissued in another.

M. de Witte's fourth great undertaking—the first in point of time—is under way to-day, but it will not be concluded for several years. This is the Government monopoly of the sale of alcohol. Hitherto his official achievements had been in the line of economic science, connected only indirectly with social problems. His latest legislation, however, strikes deep to the very roots of popular welfare. Drunkenness is a great curse in Russia, as everywhere. The consumption of alcohol per head is not so great there as in the United Kingdom, but it does more harm, for there is in Russia an entire class, the peasants—the very class upon whom in the last analysis the prosperity and security of the country rest—which is impoverished and degraded by drink to an extent not found in any class of any other country. The very virtues of the Russian peasant—his good humour, his sociability, his kindness of heart—make him an easy victim, and to these must be added the terrible loneliness of his life, the long black evenings of winter, the total absence of any other form of entertainment, his ignorance and illiteracy, and finally the poisonous filth which has been all that he could buy in the shape of alcohol. To the late Emperor Alexander III. belongs the credit of seeing

that this evil, destroying his people wholesale, must absolutely be stopped so far as legislation can stop it, but hitherto no Russian statesman has been found courageous enough to carry the gigantic task to its logical conclusion. Already in 1885 a law had been passed prohibiting the sale of spirits apart from the sale of food, except in corked bottles, and forbidding the establishments permitted to sell spirits by the bottle to consist of more than one room, or to have on the premises any spirits in open vessels. This law killed the drinking-house, pure and simple, but the peasant could still drink all he desired by going to a *traktir*, or restaurant, where a few bits of fish and bread were also for sale. It did nothing to prevent the sale of physiologically noxious spirit, and most important, it left the publican free to buy the peasant's labour or produce for spirit—the most ruinous course of all. The Emperor Alexander III. perceived that what had been done so far was after all but a half-measure, and that nothing short of a State control of the retail sale of drink would save the peasant from ruin. But M. Bunge, the first Minister of Finance to whom the opportunity was given, dared not seize it; M. Vishnegradski, the second, determined to do so, but always put off the first step till the morrow; M. de Witte, fresh from his financial success, and looking for new legislative worlds to conquer, took upon himself the burden of this reform, and by the law of 1894 a gradual Government monopoly of the sale of spirit was established.

The principles upon which he has acted are briefly as follows: A man drinks for three reasons: First, because he has a natural desire to do so; second, because he is excited to do so; or third, because he is given credit to enable him to do so. From the first of these reasons drinking is seen to be inevitable; complete prohibition is impossible, and the evasion of it only leads to more destructive drinking than that for which a cure is sought. But the second and third causes given above can be removed: it shall be no man's interest to excite another to drink, and no man

shall be supplied with drink on credit. Incidentally, no man shall drink stuff which poisons him physically and destroys him morally. Therefore it follows that nobody except the State shall make either a direct or indirect profit from the sale of spirit. On January 1, 1901, the law of 1894 was extended to all Russia except Siberia and the Caucasus, and therefore in a short time the whole manufacture and sale of spirit in the Russian Empire will be a strict Government monopoly ; the spirit will be of pure quality ; it will not be sold by the glass except *bonâ fide* with food ; and it will be sold for cash only. I have heard not a little complaint and indeed denunciation of this legislation, but in my opinion it is a magnificent reform, under the peculiar conditions of Russian life, and redounds to the honour alike of the monarch who perceived its necessity, and of the statesman who is carrying it into effect.

In one respect this reform offers far less difficulty in Russia than, for instance, in England. In the latter country a man gets drunk, at his pleasure, upon brandy, or whisky, or gin, or rum, or beer ; in the former the only intoxicant known to the people is vodka. There remains, of course, nothing to prevent the peasant from buying his bottle of corn-brandy and drinking it at home, but there, at any rate, as has been well said, "the blandishments of the publican would probably be replaced by conjugal remonstrances."

Finally, in this connection, what has been the financial result of monopoly so far as it has gone ? Monopoly was certainly not introduced into Russia for any profit it might bring—the other reasons for it were so overwhelming as to render that one unnecessary—but it has been a source of additional revenue to the State, all the same, for the net profit for 1901 is calculated at over four millions sterling. The uniform price of spirit is now 6*s*.—$1.45—a gallon.

I have said already that the system of "educational protection"—in plain language, the development of home industries

by means of high duties upon imported manufactured articles and upon raw material which the country itself is also able to produce—has been the central idea of M. de Witte's national policy. With the resulting industrial and commercial Russia of to-day he is more closely identified than any other man. In a recent report to the Emperor he points to this with pardonable pride. Classifying the national industrial production under nine heads—textiles, food, animal products, wood, paper, chemicals, pottery, manufactured metal, and various—from 1878 to 1887 Russia produced 26,000,000 roubles' worth; from 1888–92 the output was 41,000,000 roubles; and from 1893–97 it had risen to no less than 161,000,000 roubles. That is, the progress of the figures of industrial business—the industrial turn-over—during the latest quinquennial period was four times that of the preceding period, and six times that which ended ten years ago. The figures relating to the extraction and production of minerals are as striking as those of manufacture. Of coal, petroleum, pig-iron, iron, and steel, Russia produced in 1877 a total of 1,700,000 tons; in 1898 she produced close upon 24,000,000 tons. To take the latest figures of all—of coal, cast and wrought iron, steel, and cotton goods, Russia produced in 1892, 9,000,000 tons, and in 1900 nearly 21,000,000 tons.* Such figures are alone a sufficient justification of M. de Witte's policy, but as, under the Emperor, he controls the economic and industrial future of Russia, and as foreign capitalists will certainly turn their attention more and more to that country, it is worth while to quote from his own lips a lucid summary and defence of his actions. He gave this in an official speech a few years ago, but I have never seen it in English.

"History shows," he said, "that exclusively agricultural countries, even when they are politically independent and internationally powerful, are economically restricted to the *rôle* of tributary colonies to industrial countries, which are, so to speak,

* The exact and detailed figures will be found in the next chapter.

their metropolis. In exclusively agricultural countries neither intensive agriculture nor an accumulation of capital is possible. A large spirit of enterprise is never found there. Technical knowledge is rare there, and, as our own experience shows, even the food of the people depends upon circumstances now of one kind, now of another, against which agriculture cannot contend. . . . The best protection that can be afforded to agriculture consists in assuring for it a market at home for its products, and remunerative wages for labour which finds no occupation on the land. . . . The ultimate aim of the protectionist system is therefore to enfranchise our national production from its dependence alike upon foreign labour and foreign markets, and to raise our country to an economic unity of an independent importance. Like all other methods of action, protection should only be regarded as a temporary measure, in force until the time comes when its object is reached.

"It is not, however, surprising that many persons think this temporary measure should be permanent. Those who benefit by protection are not disposed to let themselves be deprived of all the advantages which it brings them. That is why we see a certain dissatisfaction at the influx of foreign capital for industrial purposes, capital which creates competition, which in its turn lowers prices and reduces profits. We sometimes hear individual interests, shielding themselves behind a sham patriotism, speaking of 'squandering the natural resources of our country,' or of the 'enslavement of our people to foreigners.' It is not the first time that such complaints are heard. They arose in the days of Peter the Great, when he wished to 'open the window toward Europe.' The Great Reformer himself had to overcome this 'patriotic' wish to preserve routine, ignorance, the spirit of isolation—in a word, all the fetters which confine the vital forces of the country. . . .

"The protectionist system has the effect of creating a school for our young industry. Important results have already been

obtained in this respect. Doubtless this school costs us dear. The Russian consumer pays a high price for manufactured articles: that is the chief reproach that can be made against protection. But it is precisely for this reason that the present phase must be traversed as quickly as possible, and this again is why we must attract a large amount of foreign capital into Russia.

"Unhappily, the amount of available Russian capital is insufficient; agriculture supplies almost none at all, and hoarded capital can hardly be attracted toward industrial enterprise. Abroad, capital is plentiful, and it is cheap; we must seek it there. Beyond all question it is better to see foreign capital flowing into Russia, than to witness the importation of foreign products. For it is by means of this foreign capital that Russian production itself will be developed, obtaining for its own profit, at the lowest calculation, ninety per cent. of the value of the manufactured article."

This speech is not only M. de Witte's reply to the so-called "pro-Russian" party, which detests foreigners and all their ways and works, and to those who charge him with destroying a natural agricultural community in order to create an artificial industrial one, but it is a concise summary of Russian economic policy. It deserves, therefore, the most careful attention in other countries.

Alongside his invitation to foreign capital, as a counterpoise to the protectionist *régime*—that is, to replace by it that healthy and necessary competition which a high tariff of itself tends to suppress—M. de Witte has done much to supply capital in Russia with its helpmate, labour. To give one example only, since the emancipation of the serfs every peasant has had the theoretical right to a passport (without which he cannot move outside his native village). In practice, however, he was almost as tightly chained to the soil as before; for passports are issued by the village community, the *mir*, and the *mir* gave them only to men whose payments of taxes were not in arrears. But as

the *mir* is always in arrears of payment, for which all its members are jointly and severally responsible, it could refuse a passport to anybody. Moreover, if a number of men were working in a factory away from home, and that factory for any reason were closed, the police of the place immediately shipped all the workmen back to their own communes. M. de Witte has gained for every Russian of the labouring classes the right to a passport for at least one year. This reform, simple in itself, is obviously of the greatest importance in the development of industrial enterprise, although at times of political trouble the police authorities probably ignore this yearly passport. Moreover, he has drawn up a code of regulations corresponding to our Factory Acts, workmen's compensation, &c., and is about to present them to the Council of Ministers. These are of the nature of reforms to assure labour in Russia of consideration and protection analogous to that which it enjoys in other countries. Finally, he is at present turning his attention to the introduction of the metric system into Russia, and to the development of a Russian mercantile marine.

Such, in brief, are the career and the views of the most influential statesman of Russia—a man, moreover, if the Tsar's confidence continues to be extended to him in the same full measure as hitherto, whose influence upon Russian affairs, national and international, may be even greater in the future than in the past. One obvious danger accompanies his insatiable activity. In order to get things done in accordance with his policy he has transferred one department after another to the Ministry of Finance, until the work of this office is assuming dimensions beyond the personal supervision of any one man. Moreover, however great the will, there is a limit to human endurance, and that limit, in M. de Witte's case, must be nearly reached. If his health broke down, and caused him to relinquish his work half finished, there is no telling what the consequences might be.

CHAPTER XXIII

RUSSIAN FINANCE, COMMERCE, AND INDUSTRY

THE finances, national and international, of the Russian Empire form a very complex subject, about which serious misapprehensions exist, even among foreigners who study such matters, while gross mistakes receive popular credence. A volume, not a chapter, would be necessary for a complete exposition, even if I myself possessed the technical qualifications for so difficult a task. Russian finance, industry, and natural resources have, however, become of late the subject of frequent and familiar public comment, commonly inexact, and therefore, even within the restricted limits of my space and my own competence, I hope to be able to throw some light upon them.

The Russian national debt, which is less than those of France and England only, is now £680,000,000 ($3,311,000,000). Upon this she pays an annual interest of about £27,200,000 ($132,500,000). Now, in view of these vast figures and the long series of Russian loans that have been floated (chiefly in France) during the last few years, popular opinion, and indeed to a large extent educated opinion also, have come to regard Russia as a country which is not paying its way, which is expanding and undertaking new enterprises far beyond its financial resources, and which can only keep going by constantly borrowing from its neighbours. And this opinion is often popularly illustrated by pictures of Russian

statesmen and financiers running about the world trying to raise loans.

In one sense it is perfectly true that Russia needs money; but in the sense in which the above opinions are commonly stated and believed, they are wholly inaccurate. The Russian public debt is very large, but it is being paid off at the present time at the rate of £2,500,000 a year. During the past ten years no less than £30,000,000 has been paid off. This striking act is usually overlooked. Moreover, as security for its debt, the Russian State (I am not speaking of the country of Russia: the difference is vital) has natural resources and productive public works surpassing in value those of any other State in the world. Besides its enormous mineral wealth, which has hardly been scratched as yet, it draws, for instance, an annual net revenue of more than five millions sterling from its forests; and while the United States has almost exhausted its timber, and Europe is looking around anxiously to see where its wood and wood-pulp are to come from in a few years, the Russian State has 200,000,000 acres of real forest as yet untouched. (Official figures give a far larger area than this, but I am speaking of genuine forest, not mere forest-land.) Russia's peasants pay (minus large arrears) the State an annual rent of £8,460,000. It owns and works over 24,000 miles of railway, of which the average net earnings from 1897–99 were £14,800,000. Its budget shows a considerable surplus every year—with these surpluses the Trans-Siberian Railway has been largely built. These considerations will place the financial position of Russia in a new light for most people; but what follows will astonish still more all who have not looked carefully into the matter. I turn now to Russian loans.

During the past fifteen years Russia has borrowed enormously—that is what strikes the popular imagination. But during these fifteen years Russia has converted and redeemed in cash previous loans amounting to over £440,000,000. In

fact, *from* 1887 *to* 1901 *the Russian treasury has not received from new loans a single penny of capital more than the old capital it repaid its creditors.*

How baseless, therefore, is the widespread notion that Russia, like a spendthrift, borrows to fill the gap between her income and her expenditure, is thus seen. But why, it will perhaps be asked, does Russia borrow at all under these circumstances? For two reasons: First, to pay off more costly debts—loans previously contracted at a higher rate of interest—and thus to unify her debt, both for her own economy and for the convenience of her creditors;† second, to construct public works necessary alike for the development of her national resources, and in order that many of the great industries which this development has already called into existence, and which largely depend upon Government orders for their support, may not languish and disappear, and thus perhaps fail her when she needs them most. This is what happens: Potential traffic justifies a new railway between two points; either the State finds the money in the first place, or it authorises a company to do so, and as the company cannot dispose of its bonds the State takes them over at second hand; the railway is constructed and gets to work; the State borrows abroad as much as it has lent to the railway; instead of the bonds on, say, blue paper of the railway, there are the bonds on, say, white paper of the Russian public debt. These are precisely the circumstances under which much of Russia's national indebtedness has been incurred. In conclusion, the truth is that the Russian Government is glad to borrow money, at a lower rate than before, to pay off debts bearing the higher interest, or to carry out productive works, for the reasons I have given above; but it is under no present necessity whatever—and has not been for

* See "Fonds d'Etat russes et autres Valeurs mobilières" (published by the *Bulletin Russe de Statistique*), 2nd ed. pp. 114–117.

† Between 1887 and 1900 the Russian loans converted and redeemed in cash amounted to a grand total of £441,000,000.

twenty years—to borrow at rates which do not fulfil the above conditions.'

As an offset to her national debt, Russia—I am speaking still of the State—has the unique good fortune to possess an annual income from actual property and investment which alone almost pays the annual charge upon the debt. The interest upon her debt is 670 millions of francs. The net earnings of her State railways, the revenue from her forests and agricultural domains, and profits of the Bank of Russia, with certain indemnities, &c., form together an annual income of 650 million francs.† And her railways and domains are rapidly increasing in value. No other State has such a *real* security, as distinct from national credit, to offer its creditors.

In 1898–99 the fiscal receipts from all sources exceeded the Government expenditure (including £9,516,000 for extraordinary naval shipbuilding and £4,315,000 for expenses in mitigation of bad harvests) by £34,458,000. This surplus more than met the demands for the construction of the Siberian and other State Railways and purchase of rolling stock, £22,922,000, and advances of capital to railway companies for new construction, £9,000,000.

The Russian State, which at the outbreak of the Crimean War had but a thousand kilometres of railway, to day owns and operates 38,250 kilometres, of which 8345 kilometres are

* In May 1901, a Russian four per cent. loan for 424,000,000 francs was floated in Paris, according to the Imperial *ukaz*, "in order to replace in the Imperial Treasury the sums spent in 1900 in advances to railroad companies, and to provide for similar advances to be made during the current year." This loan was subscribed several times over, the allotment being fifteen per cent. for paid-up bonds and two and a half for others. It is now stated that another loan for a thousand million francs (£40,000,000) will shortly be placed upon the same market. Prophecy, however, about Russian loans is always dangerous. In fact, even official assurances do not cover very long periods. "I authorise you," M. de Witte is reported to have said to a correspondent (*Daily Telegraph*, March 5, 1901), "to state over again, as emphatically as you know how, that I have no intention whatever of borrowing." Ten weeks later (May 12) the Imperial *ukaz* authorising the loan was published.

† *Bulletin Russe de Statistique Financière*, 1901, p. 23.

double-track. This is more than any other State in the world. Last year, in spite of financial crises and commercial depression, railway passengers increased in number more than a million, and the amount of freight carried was 86,000,000 tons, against 79,000,000 in 1899. The net annual revenue from the State railways alone pays half the interest upon the national debt.*

Such are, necessarily in a very condensed form, the statistical facts concerning Russian national finance which are apparently quite unknown to the host of facile critics of contemporary Russia, and especially to those who believe that Russia spends right and left, upon all sorts of objects, the large sums she has borrowed in France.†

I must allude for a moment to the only way in which these remarkable and impressive figures are directly attacked, namely, by the charge that they are not honest—that the Russian budget, in a word, is "cooked." The allegation is neither fair nor intelligent. It is not fair, because none of those who make it ever give the grounds of their charge or any alternative or comparative figures in disproof of the official ones. And it is not intelligent, because the Russian budget, though it cannot but be complicated when dealing with such vast sums, does yield to the careful student every fact he desires to extract from it. Some official Russian statistics undoubtedly exaggerate—as

* The gross revenue of all the Russian State railways (excluding the Siberian, but including the Trans-Caspian) was in 1897 £2035 per mile.

† Even serious students of Russian economics fall, notwithstanding their care and good will, into this gross error. For example, Mr. Alexander Hume Ford, "an unbiased American engineering traveller," contributing an interesting series of articles to the *Engineering Magazine* upon "Russia's marvellous industrial expansion and mechanical needs," writes: "It must not be lost sight of for a moment that Russia is spending every cent she can possibly borrow in developing her magnificent resources. New and mighty canals are to be cut, rivers and harbours deepened, arid lands irrigated, forests cleared and waste lands reclaimed; cities, villages, and workshops are being built, colonies are planted in new localities, where modern systems of drainage and agriculture are being introduced." (April 1901, p. 39.) Nearly the whole of this attribution of Russian loans is entirely fanciful. I have explained above where the money really goes.

for example, in reckoning mere forest-land as genuine timber-forest, but this exaggeration is always evident to the impartial student, and it does not appear in financial statistics, which are kept and presented with the utmost minuteness and detail. Compared with the French budget, the Russian annual balance-sheet is child's play. The difference is that the Russian Ministry of Finance desires for its own sake that its figures shall be understood, whereas the French budget is an elaborate concealment, beneath colossal complications and endless cross-reference, of unwelcome facts.* The memory of weary days devoted to the volumes of the French budget leads me to say that in it only those who hide can find. On the other hand, any statistical financial figure about Russia can be found without undue difficulty in the publications of the Ministry of Finance, or those issued semi-officially, with its cognizance and permission. To suppose that the whole of these is one vast and marvellously calculated network of deceit is childish.

From *la haute finance* to the poor *mujik* is a longer step in appearance than in reality. I turn to the Russian peasant here because any one who wishes, for whatever reason, to disparage the figures I have cited above can best do so by emphasising the condition of the masses of the Russian people. In spite of all her brilliant progress in manufacture, and her great industrial development, Russia is still chiefly an agricultural country. The vast majority of her people draw their living from the soil, and must long continue to do so, and the economic ideal of Russian statesmen should be to increase *pari passu* the material wants of the peasantry and their means of supplying them. Russia may—and I think will, as the other nation of colossal natural resources developed behind a high-tariff wall has done—become an exporting nation, but her best market will always

* M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, the eminent French writer upon economics: "Our unhappy Budgets are retouched and altered to such an extent that it is impossible to recognise them or find one's way about in them." And see "The Peoples and Politics of the Far East," pp. 124-127.

be found under the roofs of her own people. It is but too true that the condition of the Russian peasantry is at present far from satisfactory. While the people have rapidly increased in number the amount of land communally owned and tilled by them has remained constant since the Liberation of the Serfs, with the result that the outcome per family has grown steadily less and therefore the standard of physical well-being has slowly declined. Moreover, the famous "black earth" districts, the most fertile agricultural portions of the Empire, have been visited, like the poorer lands, by repeated famine. A succession of bad harvests has been even more disastrous in Russia than elsewhere. It is not without reason, therefore, that the careful observer puts forward the suffering *mujik* in reply to the splendid figures of the Minister of Finance.

The reply is effective as far as it goes, but it is not conclusive. Other countries have suffered from a succession of bad harvests, and there is no reason to believe that Russia will not enjoy the fat years of the cycle again.* I have taken some personal interest in agriculture, and I believe that we are on the eve of great advances in the chemical and even in the bacteriological fertilisation of land. If this be so, Russia will profit more than any other country, and if I were Minister of Finance I would generously subsidise laboratories of experimental agricultural chemistry. The Government is fully alive to the condition of the peasantry, for it is expending many millions of roubles upon relief, and employing thousands of poverty-stricken peasants upon the public work most urgently needed in Russia—road-making. The last budget statement contains the news that the payment of no less than £12,000,000 of arrears of redemption of land by the peasant proprietors has been virtually regarded as a bad debt. Over a million sterling has been wiped off, and

* Indeed, the commercial tide seems turning already. The Russian customs receipts for the first half of 1901, just published, show an increase of no less than twenty-five per cent. over those for the first half of 1900—109,000,000 roubles against 87,300,000.

the payment of ten millions been "distributed by instalments." The State monopoly of alcohol, and the improved condition of its sale, will tend to remove one of the contributing causes of the peasant's poverty. Siberian agriculture, too, is being opened up for and by the peasants. Moreover, agriculture was not unfortunate everywhere in Russia last year. Mr. Consul-General Michell's Report says that "the harvest of 1900 in sixty provinces of Russia taken as a whole is considered fairly favourable," it being 10.3 per cent. in excess of the average of the previous five years. The total product of grain grown in 1900 is computed, according to the same authority, at 1,119,019,950 cwts., lentils and beans 4,949,775 cwts., potatoes 513,891,289 cwts., and 19,339 tons of butter were exported from Siberia alone. These figures should mitigate pessimism somewhat.

Finally, M. de Witte's economic *régime* has for one of its main aims to provide a large proportion of the people with means of livelihood other than agriculture, and the production in a year of nearly 5,000,000 tons of steel and iron, and 60,000,000 barrels of oil, and the raising of nearly 16,000,000 tons of coal, to say nothing of the large output of all the mills and factories of Moscow and Poland, means not a little employment for peasants who a few years ago were all agricultural labourers.*

Not only in agriculture, however, has Russia recently suffered severely. Her commerce and industry are still in a state of

* In order to show that "the results obtained fully justify the policy pursued by the Government," M. de Witte has just published statistics of the increase of production in four great classes during eight years. They may be tabulated as follows:

	Output in tons, 1892.	Output in tons, 1900.
Coal	6,800,000	15,800,000
Cast-iron	1,050,000	2,850,000
Wrought-iron and steel	984,000	2,000,000
Cotton goods	140,000	232,000
Totals	8,974,000	20,882,000

great depression. British readers, at any rate, have not lacked full information upon this topic, for Mr. Cooke, British Commercial Agent in Russia, has industriously gathered and forcibly presented every fact and deduction that places Russian mineral and metallurgical enterprises in the most discouraging light.* I do not mean for a moment, of course, that he has sought to show the situation as blacker than it is, but only that, in my opinion, his Report would have been of greater service to the interests he represents in Russia if the lights and shadows had been more naturally balanced. Here is one example of what I mean. Mr. Cooke says: "The Russian iron industry has no market beyond the frontier. Some 100 tons of southern pig-iron, it is lately announced, have just been despatched from the Kertch works to Leghorn. . . . This new opening for Russian iron produce has been loudly acclaimed as offering another solution of present difficulties." But Mr. Vice-Consul Wardrop had already reported from Kertch, a fortnight earlier, that "Perhaps the most noteworthy item in the exports is the pig-iron shipped to Marseilles and Rotterdam"—2815 tons. And at the same time Mr. Vice-Consul Walton had reported from Mariupol as follows: "Some 50,000 tons of hematite have lately been sold to the north of Russia, and trial shipments have been made to Germany, France, and Belgium; thus not only is South Russia no longer a customer for pig-iron from abroad, but she is entering the market as a supplier of this commodity." I do not suggest, of course, that these small exports of iron from Russia necessarily presage an important new development of Russian industry, but I do say that the incident has its significance, and that this has been better appreciated by the old-fashioned Consuls in this case than by the modern Commercial Agent. And I think that the facts, if Mr. Cooke had known them, deserved some more balanced comment, for an iron-

* "Mineral and Metallurgical Industries of Russia." Diplomatic and Consular Reports, Miscellaneous Series, No. 555. Foreign Office, June 1901.

exporting country like England, than "The Russian iron industry has no market across the frontier."

Mr. Cooke says that "Russia became the playground for universal Bourse speculation." The word "universal" is too strong, and indeed elsewhere he places the cap where it fits. The present aspect of the industrial condition of Russia, so far as foreign investment is concerned, is, speaking roughly, the work of unscrupulous Belgian company-promoters, or perhaps, more correctly speaking, of unscrupulous company-promoters working in Belgium because of the opportunities afforded them by Belgian law. These gentlemen have taken advantage of the enthusiasm in Belgium and France for things Russian to float company after company, to build ironworks after ironworks, where it was perfectly evident that only bankruptcy could result. Some ironworks had no ore accessible, some no coal, some no limestone. The nominal capital was in every case enormous, the working capital absurdly insufficient. The promoters placed their shares, pocketed the huge "rake-off," and are now turning their malevolent attention to the Far East, while the unhappy investors in their Russian companies will lose almost every penny. I made careful inquiries on the spot, and I do not hesitate to say that a number of these Belgian and French enterprises were nothing better than swindles from the start. Some of them, as M. de Witte himself has just pointed out, with nominal capitals of millions of roubles, began operations without working capital, and even in debt. "Nine-tenths of the foreign industrial enterprises initiated in Southern Russia during the last decade have in the first place been promoted exclusively for the personal aggrandisement of the promoters."—Odessa correspondent of the *Standard*, August 3, 1901. For these failures Russia is unjustly condemned. She is no more to blame for them than England is to blame for the shocking record of liquidated companies on the London Stock Exchange. As Mr. Cooke himself says, "Firmer or older-

established enterprises even in the metallurgical industry, keeping their own steady course, apart from the wild run of speculation, have stood their ground."

It is true, of course, that Russia has suffered a financial and economic crisis of the most serious kind. But is she alone in this misfortune ? Is not the German iron industry in a similar position ? Are there not 50,000 unemployed in Berlin ? Are not German workmen being transported by the Government back to the land ? Have not German banks collapsed right and left ? In France, too, is there not a deficit of 110,000,000 francs in this year's budget ? Have not the French taxes for the first ten months of the present year fallen short of the estimate by 90,000,000 francs ? Are not French wine-growers threatening to plough up their vineyards ? And is the United Kingdom wholly without anxiety regarding its own economic outlook ? If Russian national securities have fallen, what about Consols ? Apart from the injurious effects of the South African War, these epochs of bad trade are cyclic, and depression is far less likely to persist in Russia than in countries which possess neither the vast real wealth of her State nor the boundless natural resources of her country. For, notwithstanding Russian development and production, the striking figures of which I have already given, her natural wealth is as yet hardly touched. Mr. Cooke says, in the Report already quoted :

"Not that there is not incalculable wealth, more especially mineral, in the vast dominions of the Russian Empire. The natural resources of the country, as is well known, are indeed enormous. The future, with such assets to realise, cannot but be of the most promising."

American authorities are even more enthusiastic. Mr. Vice-Consul-General Hanauer says : "The vast Empire offers the best and most profitable field for our promoters of railway, electric, and other enterprises, for the construction of water-works and drainage systems, building streets and canals, works

in iron, making dry-docks and harbours, and opening mines. . . . I would recommend my countrymen to 'go East,' and employ their talent, time, money, and energy in Russia, which will return them ample compensation." * And Mr. Alexander Hume Ford, an engineering expert, after a journey of investigation in Russia for an important American technical review, concluded as follows : "In fact, Russia seems to stand to-day where America stood half a century ago, on the threshold of an industrial prosperity and development which must soon awe the world by its rapid and stupendous growth. It is here that the Goulds, Rockefellers, Huntingtons, Carnegies, and Flaglers of the future will spring up and become all-powerful." † I myself have certainly become a convinced believer in the future industrial development of Russia, and in this development foreign capital, which will be welcomed and will receive perfectly fair treatment, judiciously placed, after careful examination and without inflation of values—placed, that is, for investment and not for speculation, should—on one condition—play a large and a very profitable part.

The directions in which foreign capital has been employed in Russia, or may be, are very numerous indeed. The cotton-spinning mills of Moscow and St. Petersburg are the first example that comes to mind, and their profits in the past have been enormous—reaching sometimes fifty per cent. and even more. The iron industry of to-day is largely a result of foreign enterprise, and is certain of enormous development in the future. A commission of four experts, including Professor Mendeleyef, the celebrated chemist, appointed by the Tsar in 1899, reported that there are 2,400,000,000 tons of iron-ore in the Urals alone—ten million tons of pig-iron a year for a hundred years.

* Report from Frankfort, June 20, 1899.

† *Engineering Magazine*, April 1901, p. 41.

The petroleum industry at Baku is almost entirely the work and the capital of foreigners, led by the great names of Rothschild and Nobel. Last year the Russian output of petroleum was greater than that of the United States, it is increasing, and important new fields are certain of discovery. Such a production in so short a time would have been impossible unless foreign capital and wise and generous Russian regulations had worked hand in hand.

During the ten years 1891–1900 Russia produced eleven and a half million ounces of fine gold. During the last four years the production has fallen off somewhat, but it is beyond question that there are valuable deposits still untouched in Siberia, and that under a more enlightened official *régime* than that at present in force foreign enterprise would be able to exploit them. The world has yet to learn, too, of the gold-fields of enormous wealth of which Russia has—by means also unappreciated yet—become possessed.

Russia has vast deposits of coal, but for some reason or other neither Russians nor foreigners are working them to any great extent. In vain has M. de Witte urged Russian capitalists and coal-owners to greater efforts in this direction. He has just sent the following sarcastic telegram to the Mining Congress sitting at Kharkor: "The owners of ironworks and coal-mines are continually complaining of the difficulty of selling their products, and of the consequent restriction of the output. However, the imports of these products during the current year up to October 1 amounted to 106,000 tons for cast-iron and cast-steel, to 54,000 tons for machines made of these materials, and to 2,970,000 tons for coal. In view of the very high customs duties imposed for the protection of home industries, I ask the Congress how it is to be explained that people can speak of a difficult situation in the face of such considerable imports of products which might be supplied by Russian industry." And a contract for 60,000 tons of coal for immediate delivery, at

$12.24 a ton, is announced from New York as I write. In the great Donetz coal basin there is, I am sure, an important opening for foreign enterprise, especially as all Russian properties can be purchased cheaply for cash just now.

The manganese industry of the Caucasus offers, so far as I am able to judge, a remarkable opportunity for judicious investment of a certain kind, and, indeed, the mineral development of the whole Caucasus district will probably astonish the world some day. As for the Urals, their extraordinary richness in minerals is a matter of common knowledge, but few people realise what openings they present for foreign capital. Central Asia is as yet an unknown land to engineers and capitalists, but the opportunities there for a combination of the two—and I speak from careful examination on the spot—are great, and cannot fail to be seized before long.

The forests of Russia, with the price of timber steadily rising and the demand for wood-pulp always increasing, also offer a further opportunity, and joinery mills, since Russian workmen are exceptionally clever carpenters, should be successful. The manufacture of hardware, linoleum, and many small objects now imported from Germany, should pay handsomely. Already an important Sheffield firm is preparing to manufacture files and tools in Russia.* And there are many openings for imported British goods, if intelligently brought before the consumers.†

* I quote the following interesting testimony from the Odessa correspondent of the *Standard*: "Lodz, known now as the Russian or Polish Manchester, is a prominent example of successful foreign industrial enterprise. Fifteen years ago it was a place of some ten or twelve thousand inhabitants; its population, wholly industrial, now numbers close upon four hundred thousand. In order to escape the prohibitively high Russian duties, and still push their trades in the Russian markets, a host of German, Austrian, Belgian, and French manufacturers have, so to say, brought their mills and factories over the Russian frontier, and, with scarcely an exception, they are all flourishing. As, generally speaking, all British manufactures have an exceptionally high reputation in this country, there is no reason why British manufacturers should not start operations in Russia with even greater success than that which has so abundantly crowned the enterprise of the Lodz cosmopolitans."

† I cannot do better than to copy here the printed letter which Colonel Murray,

This summary by no means exhausts the directions in which M. de Witte's policy of educational protection invites foreign capital to come and establish a healthy competition with men and means in Russia. So far only a few capitalists have discovered Russia and her economic *régime;* they are chiefly Englishmen and Belgians, with comparatively few French and German companies.

Not that joint-stock enterprise does not already exist on a large scale, for of Russian companies no fewer than 580 declared a dividend during the first nine months of 1901, their total nominal capital being £105,000,000, and their average dividend no less than 10.1 per cent. But it may be regarded as certain that, unless some international catastrophe should interrupt peaceful relations, men and associations with large sums of money to invest will turn their attention and their talents more and more toward Russia.

After so many general considerations it may interest the reader to see a foreign company in Russia actually at work. I will therefore try to picture for him the best I saw.

In the south of Russia there is a large flourishing town, owned entirely by Englishmen, the seat of a great and prosperous industry, created by Englishmen, the most striking example of how foreign enterprises, wisely conducted under

the energetic British Consul-General at Warsaw, has prepared to send to his many unintelligent British correspondents:

"I beg to acknowledge the receipt of the price-list which you have been good enough to send me, but of which I regret that I am unable to make any use, as it is in English, as are also the details and prices given in it.

"To bring goods to the notice of buyers in this country price-lists must be in the Russian, Polish, or German languages, and all dimensions and prices must be in Russian weights, measures, and money, and moreover, the prices given should be those at which the goods can be obtained from your agents in Russia, or if you have no regular agents, full details should be given as to probable cost of freight, duty, &c., to give the buyer some idea of what the goods will cost him if he imports them himself."

Russian laws, may thrive in Russia. Few people know of this, nor did I until I began to investigate the conditions attaching to foreign investments in Russia and to look for a typical case to describe. Yet such is the town of Usofka, the site of the New Russia Company, Ltd. You will not, by the way, find its shares in the list of quotations; they are all privately held, and nobody who has any would be likely to sell.

The founder of Usofka was the late John Hughes, the son of a blacksmith of Merthyr. He was at one time manager of the Millwall Ironworks, on the Thames; he built the Plymouth Breakwater Fort; and he made his first acquaintance with Russia by building the Constantine Fort at Kronstadt in 1864. His friendship with Todleben, the defender of Sevastopol and the saviour of the situation before Plevna, had something to do with his interest in Russia. Under Imperial protection he was sent to the south to search for coal. He found it, and the New Russia Company is the outcome. Now the management of the great concern is in the hands of his sons, and to them I have to express my warm thanks for hospitality and most interesting opportunities of inspection.

The railway station of Usovo and the town of Usofka are both named after John Hughes. They lie in the extreme south of Russia, just north of the Sea of Azov and about a third of the way from Rostov to Odessa. Much thumbing of the time-table is necessary to get there. As I came up the Black Sea from Batum, I left the steamer at Novorossisk (where there is the largest grain elevator in the world) and went by train to Rostov. Thence to Khartsisk and thence again to Yasinovataya—fairly unknown country, as you see. There at dusk a phaeton and dashing pair awaited me, and an eighteen-verst drive, quickly covered, across the steppe, brought me to my destination. As I entered the house a valse of Chopin was being played on the piano. "You will find us in the billiard-room, when you have dressed," said my host. It seemed like

a dream, so much civilisation, all of a sudden, after months spent in provincial Russia, in Siberia, and in Central Asia.

The New Russia Company's estate, owned, not leased, extends to some 60,000 acres. Half of this is coal-bearing land, and one-half of this half shows enough coal to last the company for two hundred years. In fact, the company sells coal, and no ironworks would do this unless there was plenty to spare. Some distance away there are 2700 acres of limestone property. The supply of iron comes from the hematite mines of Kriveirog, where the ore averages from fifty-eight to sixty-five per cent. of metallic iron. These mines, of which the New Russia Company's share is 2500 acres, are about three hundred miles away. There is enough ore in sight to last the company for from fifteen to twenty years. After that a fresh supply must be found. Its source is hardly a secret.

The manufacturing side of Usofka is like a huge ironworks anywhere else—a forest of chimneys, belching forth smoke and steam; a row of blast-furnaces, clouding the day and illuminating the night; great stretches of coke ovens; mountains of slag; acres of workshops; miles of railway with banging trucks and shrieking engines—the whole familiar industrial inferno. Beside it are two of the colliery pit-heads, and adjoining it on the other side is the town. This has no resemblance to a Russian provincial town; it is regularly laid out, its houses are solidly built and neatly kept, indeed many of them are luxurious; there is a whole street of capital shops, a co-operative store, a public garden, a branch of the Imperial Bank, a Cossack barrack. The streets are numbered on the American plan, and are called "Lines"—there are fifty "Lines," if I remember aright. The whole place, as a glance shows, is prosperous and well governed. It has no fewer than 30,000 inhabitants, and no other *raison d'être* than the New Russia Company, Ltd. Close the ironworks, and next week this town, as big as Colchester or Topeka, would be deserted.

The pay-sheet of Usofka contains 12,000 men, and £50,000 a month is paid in wages. This gives some idea of the scale of the company's operations, and of the benefit to Russia which this foreign enterprise confers. But the figures of output are perhaps even more informative. There are six large blast-furnaces, five working, and one kept in reserve. These are worked with what I believe is called a "ten-pound pillar." In 1899 the output of pig-iron was 335,000 tons. For the production of steel there are ten open-hearth furnaces (into which the metal is carried hot—an improvement, unless I am mistaken, upon English methods) and two Bessemer converters. During the year preceding my visit 50,000 tons of steel billets were produced. The rolling-mills, in which I noticed that an electric trolley carried the red-hot ingots from one rolling-table to another—a very useful little time-saver introduced locally—turned out last year 150,000 tons of rails. Besides this, 10,000 tons of "merchant iron" and 8000 tons of "Spiegeleisen" were produced and sold. From the company's coal mines, six in all, 650,000 tons were lifted, of which about 30,000 tons were sold. The company made and used 350,000 tons of coke, and bought more besides, and it raised from its own mines at Krivei-rog 500,000 tons of iron ore. One other interesting item is that the company has a large farm adjoining the town, for the production of vegetables and forage, and that it ploughs every year some 8000 acres of land.

To complete the appreciation of this great industrial enterprise, and its significance for Russia, two other facts should be borne in mind: first, that in 1870 there were only a few huts on the steppe where now this busy town thrives; and second, that the whole of the output during these thirty years has been used in Russia, and not a yard or a pound sent to any other country.

The workmen at a Russian place like this present many contrasts with labour elsewhere. Originally they were all from

the land, attracted for a time by the higher wages, or actually driven from home by poverty. They worked in the mill for a few months and then took their savings back to the village home. Many of them are still of this class, but now these stay as a rule for three or four years, and there has in addition grown up a regular working class, dissociated for ever from the soil. The growth of this proletariat is one of the most striking developments in modern Russia, and in time will undoubtedly transform many old conditions. Their wages are both low and high—low in actual money, high because the labour is inefficient. The lowest rate is 80 kopecks, about 1*s.* 8*d.* or forty cents, a day, and this rises, with the skill and responsibility of the recipient, until rollers and fitters and furnace-men draw from three and a half to four roubles, say 7*s.* 6*d.* to 8*s.* 6*d.*—$1.75 to $2—a day. Moreover, any factory in Russia is handicapped by the great number of saints' days and Imperial fête-days, when work ceases by official order. In fact the working-days only average about twenty-one a month. The character of the labourers may be judged from the fact that they occasionally take a nap upon the railway line! I myself saw a man stretched on his face fast asleep on the iron plates which form the roof of a blast furnace, with his head a few inches from a shaft up which at any moment poisonous gases might burst.

Foreign enterprises in Russia usually either fail or pay what would be regarded in England, at any rate, as very large dividends; and if they fail it is generally from their own fault. But they have to face a good many conditions which an English or American employer would consider intolerable at home. For instance, the precautions they have to take against accidents are infinite, and if a man is killed the police procedure which follows is a perfect inquisition. For example, the foreign head of the department in which the victim worked cannot leave the country until a verdict is reached and penalties inflicted, and the various trials and inquiries may last a year or more. Again,

in Russia the State imposes upon private enterprise obligations which elsewhere it discharges itself. At Usofka, since I am taking this as a typical business, the company has to support schools in which are eight hundred scholars; a hospital, in which there are one hundred beds and six doctors; a force of police consisting of three head constables, four sub-constables, and seventy-six men; and even to make a contribution to the guard of one hundred and fifty mounted Cossacks quartered in the town.

Besides these obligations, the company has two Russian taxes to pay. First, the *zemstvo* taxes—call them rates. These amount to £10,000. Second, a new cumulative tax on general profits, and, as the New Russia Company had paid a dividend of fifty per cent., this tax was ten per cent. Third, as this is an English company, there is the income-tax at home.

But even yet I have not touched upon the severest handicap of all. This can only be explained rather technically. Iron-masters will understand it, and others must believe that it is far harder than exists elsewhere in the world. I allude to the tests which the material supplied to Government, of course a customer much larger than all the rest put together and doubled, has to pass before it is accepted.

Take rails, for instance, very much the most important item. First, a 35-foot rail must not vary in length more than three millimetres from the standard. Second, a 5-foot rail, previously frozen, placed upon supports 3 feet apart, receives two blows from a half-ton "monkey," falling from a height of from 8½ to 9½ feet according to the weight of the rail, and must not break or show any defect. Third, after a deflection test of from 14 to 17 tons pressure the rail must not show a permanent "set" of more than .75 millimetre. Fourth, a tensile strain of 65 kilos. to the square millimetre (about 40 tons to the square inch) must not produce an elongation of more than six per cent. And fifth, the figure produced by this strain, added to the

elongation and multiplied by two, must reach eighty-two. I am assured that a British or American railmaker would refuse a contract requiring these tests, which at Usofka are scrupulously applied by a committee of Russian engineers.

Still I have not done with the hard side. After all these conditions, obligations, taxes, and tests, it might be thought that the company could put its own price upon its output. But it is not the company which fixes the price—the Minister of Finance fixes it for it. When I was at Usofka the Government was giving its orders for steel rails at the price of one rouble ten kopecks a poud, which I work out as the equivalent of £7 4s. per ton. A year previously the price was 1.35 roubles. The Government gives its order and you take it or leave it.

Poor foreign enterprise in Russia! Well, not exactly. Mr. Hughes went off to look for a fresh cue when I hinted a curiosity concerning the dividends of the New Russia Company, but I had a suspicion that if anybody could buy its shares at many times their par value he would think himself lucky. I afterward looked up these dividends for the last ten years and found them to be as follows: Nineteen per cent., sixteen per cent., twenty-eight per cent., thirty per cent., twenty-four per cent., one hundred and twenty-five per cent., fifteen per cent., twenty per cent., twenty-five per cent., twenty per cent. And at one point in this pleasing record the share capital was doubled! Indeed a list of the concerns working in Russia, with foreign capital, which have paid between fifteen and fifty per cent. dividend would make the foreign investor's mouth water.

In conclusion, since I have described foreign enterprise in Russia as typified in this great English business, I must add one word of reservation. The New Russia Company was founded when foreign capital was admitted under easier conditions than exist nowadays, for to-day the Government would not sell such properties outright, as it did in 1870. Moreover, John Hughes, who founded it, had the foresight of a commercial Prometheus.

But I do not hesitate to say that for the foreign capitalist, if he knows where and how to go to work, there are opportunities to-day as promising as those which Mr. Hughes foresaw and utilised thirty years ago.

As so much ignorance prevails about Russia, and the general opinion of the world takes an unfavourable and unjust view of her economic position and her commercial possibilities, I have naturally been led to give prominence to facts favourable to her and attractive to others. But I would not be thought to suggest that fortunes are to be picked up in Russia more than elsewhere, or that it is sufficient merely to bring capital into the country to reap an immediate and rich pecuniary harvest. Far from it. In Russia, as elsewhere, plenty of people are waiting to sell you the worthless thing at the top price. Moreover, the conditions of Russian industrial and commercial life are peculiar, and no enterprise can succeed which does not take them closely into account Every country presents its own particular difficulties, and Russia at least as many as any other. There is here a way to do things, and a way not to do them. The openings for foreign capital are naturally known to comparatively few. Moreover, if the present policy of the State were to change its direction or lose its vigour, all the future relations of Russia and foreigners would be different. Foreign faith in Russian economic freedom is as yet a tender plant, and it might easily be blighted. So far, however, Russia's record is a good one. Nobody has ever lost a farthing by trusting the Russian State. The official conditions of the investment of foreign capital are more liberal than those of the United States, and the official attitude is one of sympathy and intelligence.* And so long as

* The following paragraph occurs in a letter recently addressed officially to *The Times* by M. Tatistcheff, the representative of the Ministry of Finance in London: "The Imperial Government, far from putting obstacles in the way of foreign, and

his Majesty Nicholas II. rules over All the Russias, and M. de Witte is his Minister of Finance, or the successors to Tsar and Minister are equally far-seeing and wise-minded, there need be no fear that these conditions and this attitude will be altered. Indeed, among the many reasons Russia has for substantial gratitude towards her present Tsar, the fact that he should so clearly perceive M. de Witte's patriotic genius and firmly uphold him against hismany enemies, constitutes by no means the least.

In conclusion, however, I must pen one word of frank and serious warning. I have previously expressed the belief that foreign capital will play a large and a profitable part in Russian industrial development—on one condition. That condition is if greater official expedition and more business-like methods —the methods of the western world, in fact—are employed in dealing with the foreign investor. At present the wearisome delay often experienced in conducting negotiations with the Russian authorities is a most serious obstacle. Foreign capital is ardently desired; the greatest intelligence is shown in examining any proposal; if the latter is found good, official promises of help are freely and sincerely given; and then the foreigner believes that he is about to accomplish something. Great is his disappointment. Delay after delay, for no conceivable cause, supervenes; months pass, and he is not one step nearer his goal; a definite conclusion of any kind seems the one thing he cannot obtain. Not seldom he abandons his enterprise in despair, and goes away with his money and his indignation. All this, so far as it is not temperamental in the Russian, is due chiefly to two causes: first, the very few officials who have authority really to conclude anything and lay it before the Tsar are overwhelmed with work, always long in arrear; and second,

especially British, investments in Russian commercial and industrial enterprises, is, on the contrary, in every way disposed to encourage and favour and to authorise to operate in Russia those companies which are based on sound commercial principles and solid capital being able by their financial organisation to guarantee the successfully carrying out of their undertakings."

even when one of these is anxious to expedite matters, every individual of a small army of subordinate functionaries is able to interpose objection after objection, and to heap technicality upon technicality in the way. If these obstacles are removed, there is plenty of foreign capital awaiting investment in Russia. If not, it will go elsewhere.

FOREIGN POLITICS

CHAPTER XXIV

RUSSIA AND THE NATIONS

THE reader of this volume has now considered the six great divisions of interest in contemporary Russia—the life of her two capitals, her vast Siberian territory and its great railway, the people and problems of the multifarious Caucasus, her new and successful empire of Central Asia with its present and prospective railway system, her dependency of Finland, and the career and policy of the man who, under the Tsar, chiefly directs her contemporary development. There remains, in conclusion, the vital question : whither is this colossal conglomeration tending ? In other words, what is to be the future of Russia ? Interesting as are her separate aspects, their chief importance and significance for other people lie in their joint and several contributions to the solution of the problem of her future destiny among the nations of the earth. He would be a bold—not to say an untrustworthy—writer who would try to give a precise answer to the above question ; but an examination of the international conditions surrounding Russia, sufficient perhaps to enable the reader who has followed me thus far to make for himself a forecast in general terms, may be attempted without over-confidence.

The future of Russia, far more than that of any other country, depends upon her relations with other nations. Three Powers of the world enjoy a certain geographical isolation which endows them with a corresponding measure of political independence. These are, first, the United States ; second, Japan ; and third, Great Britain. Except where it touches an entirely

friendly Power, the United States may be said to have no frontiers at all. The map of Europe might be repainted without affecting it. There is no great nation, except England, whose fall or aggrandisement would make it a whit the more or less secure. In a much smaller degree this is true of Great Britain, whose only frontiers are in Canada and along her Indian boundaries. Japan, too, is a Power which, except in so far as she considers Korea to be ultimately her own, has no borders that her battleships cannot protect. The converse is truer of Russia than of any other nation; with the exception of the United States, France, and Italy there is no Great Power whose frontier does not run with her own. A glance at a small scale map impresses this vital fact. Beginning at the North, the Russian land-frontier skirts successively Sweden,* Germany, Austria, Roumania (and through Roumania, the other Balkan countries of Bulgaria and Servia), Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, India, China, and (in Korea) Japan. Moreover, Russia has created an intimate relationship with the one Great Power whose frontiers do not touch her own—France; and by marriage and by protection she has interwoven her affairs with the two remaining countries of the Balkan chessboard—Greece and

* As I shall not have occasion to mention Sweden again in this connection I may say here that a curious disquiet, probably without any real basis, exists at present in Scandinavia regarding Russia. A number of Russian spies or surveyors are said to have been discovered lately in Scandinavia, disguised as pedlars, knife-grinders, &c., or accompanying genuine specimens of these. This seems incredible, but I have been assured by Swedes that it is undoubtedly true. It is certain, at any rate, that the Swedish Government is giving remarkable attention to its own military position, having under consideration, amongst other matters, a bill, to take effect immediately, to augment the period of compulsory military service from ninety days to twelve months. So noticeable is this military movement that the Russian Press has remarked that "if the dual Scandinavian kingdom were hastily preparing for war it could scarcely manifest a more feverish energy than it is now applying to the increase of its offensive and defensive power." The correspondent who quotes this adds that "money is being lavishly spent on the improvement and strengthening of old, and on the construction of new, fortresses. A new first-class fortress and a camp capable of accommodating sixty thousand troops will shortly be completed at Boden, the most strategic point in the north of Sweden."

Montenegro, and through the latter, which is virtually a Russian dependency, she is in close touch with the House of Savoy. Thus, no political or status-threatening question can arise in any nation of the world—always excepting the United States—which does not immediately and vitally affect her own interests. Therefore I say that the future of Russia, far more than that of any other country, depends upon her relations with other nations. What is for the rest of mankind a merely humanitarian motto, *humani nihil a me alienum puto*, is perforce for Russia the first axiom of foreign policy.

The strange bridal of Russia and France—the alliance of autocracy and democracy—has been familiar to all the world since the bands of the French warships at Kronstadt played the *Marseillaise*, the hymn of the revolution, before Alexander III., whose father had fallen at the hands of revolutionists. This momentous event was the direct result of the change of German policy, marked by the downfall of Bismarck and the refusal of Count Caprivi to renew the secret treaty with Russia by which Bismarck had unscrupulously sought to "hedge" against his allies of the Triple Alliance. Germany, moreover, turned to Turkey—thereby adding to a negative anti-Russian policy a positive and indeed, in Russian eyes, an aggressive one—and Russia turned to France.

Only since the Tsar's last visit to France has there been published what appears to be a correct account of the contents of the document constituting the Dual Alliance.* After the first development of the Franco-Russian *entente*, when a French fleet under Admiral Gervais visited Kronstadt, M. Ribot being Minister of Foreign Affairs, a Military Convention was signed, in 1891. This stipulated that if either nation were attacked by Germany, the other should come to its aid with a certain

* *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 21, and *La Liberté*, an interview with M. Jules Hansen, September 26, 1901.

specified force. The word "alliance" did not occur, nor was it used in any of the official speeches. This Convention appears to have been extended in 1894, but it was not until President Félix Faure's visit to Russia, in 1896, that the final step so much desired by France was taken, a formal treaty of alliance being signed in 1897 and announced to the world by the Tsar's famous words, *nations amies et alliées*, in his speech on board the *Pothuau*.

This treaty gains greatly in scope and significance by the omission of all direct reference to Germany. It declares that if either nation is attacked, the other will come to its assistance with the whole of its own military and naval forces, and that peace shall only be concluded in concert and by agreement between the two. No other *casus belli* is mentioned, no term is fixed to the duration of the treaty, and the whole instrument consists of only a few clauses.

If this account be correct, and there seems no reason to doubt that it is substantially so, a more pacific document could hardly be devised. So pacific, indeed, is it, that as the leading Hungarian paper remarked, it only serves to guarantee to Germany the undisturbed possession of Elsass and Lothringen. Its pacific character, moreover, was pointedly emphasised by the Tsar in his last speech at Compiègne, when he described the French army, whose magnificent evolutions he had just witnessed, as "a powerful support of the principles of equity upon which repose general order, peace, and the well-being of nations"—a phrase in which some commentators have seen, probably with justice, an allusion to the international Court of Arbitration at the Hague. And I may add that from all I learned in Russia I believe the Tsar would be more likely to draw the sword to compel some international dispute to be settled by arbitration instead of by war, than for any other object.

The Treaty of Alliance, it is added, had an important financial corollary. In return for the guarantee afforded to France

against German aggression, and to free Russia from her financial dependence upon Berlin, it was agreed that Russia should be allowed to contract loans upon the Paris market to the total amount of 1,500,000,000 francs, in three or four series.

The Dual Alliance has naturally had for result to confer upon France a confidence and a calm she had not previously felt—or rather to relieve her from a fear which need have had no terrors for her, while Russia has enjoyed a military prestige beyond that to which her own arms entitle her, for it has been believed that, though she might exert a restraining influence upon France, the latter would be ready enough to make any Russian quarrel her own. But practically the Dual Alliance has had chiefly a financial result—the investment of many hundreds of millions of francs in Russian immovable securities—for it is largely in repaying State advances to Russian railways that the French loans have been employed. The Russian alliance has not saved France from attack, for nobody has dreamed of attacking her ; and on the one occasion when she might have drawn the sword—about Fashoda—the influence of St. Petersburg was, with profound wisdom, used in the interests of peace.

It is commonly said that France is growing somewhat tired of this one-sided bargain, and that she is alive to the fact that while Russia is adding enormously to her sphere in the Far East, she herself stands where she did before the *fêtes* of Kronstadt and Toulon. I think that in a certain degree this is undoubtedly the case. The jest that when the *charlotte russe* was placed upon the mess-table, the French officers rose and cheered, would have no point to-day. Moreover, the generation which fought in 1870 is dying out, and the new generation has forgotten Deroulède's war-poems, and only looks upon him as the rather ridiculous conspirator of an impossible "plebiscitary republic." The Kaiser, too, ceases not his friendly overtures—witness the distinguished reception of French officers at the German manœuvres, the abandonment of the annual

military banquet at Metz in celebration of the surrender at Sédan, and the motor-car race from Paris to Berlin—an event inconceivable ten years ago. The Emperor William II. has set his heart upon certain aims which are before him now at every waking instant. To the realisation of these Russia will inevitably be opposed. Therefore it is of the most urgent importance to him to allay French resentment and if possible secure French neutrality, and to this end he will spare no effort and stop at no step short of the actual relinquishment of territory. Such an attitude on the part of Germany is obviously calculated to undermine the foundations of the alliance of France with Russia. I do not think it unreasonable to suppose that some day the Kaiser will succeed in his earnest desire to visit Paris, and from that moment the Dual Alliance will possess only an antiquarian interest, so far as it regards Germany. So far as England is concerned, its French support will be further weakened by the improvement in the relations between the two nations, which seems happily in prospect. Finally, the rapidly approaching financial embarrassment of France herself * may make it difficult for Russia to raise on the Paris market the remainder of the vast sum mentioned in connection with the signature of the Treaty of Alliance, and is certainly likely to cause her investors to be more sensible to the great depreciation of the Russian securities they already hold. The following statement recently appeared simultaneously in a number of French newspapers, thus having the character of a *communiqué* inspired from some quarter :

* The French budget for 1902 is arranged to show a nominal surplus of 7,770,519 francs. In reality, there is a deficit of no less than 101,660,897 francs. During the ten months ending October 31, 1901, the revenue from taxation was less by 140,000,000 francs than for the corresponding ten months of 1900, and less than the budget estimate by 91,000,000 francs. A new loan of 265,000,000 francs has been issued. It must be added, however, that this loan, though issued at par, was covered twenty-four times over. Lord Rosebery has just reminded us that the debt of the city of Paris is £80,000,000, and that this year there is a deficit in the municipal budget of £800,000. The French national debt was already over £1,202,000,000.

"The enormous fall which has occurred in all Russian stocks is calculated to disquiet French capitalists heavily involved in them. It is of the highest importance for them to be accurately informed on the possible consequences of this fall, which in the case of some stocks is only temporary and may even be profited by, but which, in the case of a large number, is but the signal for inevitable discomfiture." For this reason Russian enthusiasm for the alliance may also wane,* though the Tsar himself will doubtless continue to attach the greatest importance to it for the immense support it gives him in his efforts for international peace.

On the whole, therefore, though the Dual Alliance will linger long in name, most competent observers believe that its political potency will be a diminishing quantity, unless, through the improvement of relations between Russia and Great Britain, the latter become a kind of sleeping partner in it, or unless those relations grow more unfriendly, and Great Britain allies herself to some other Power. Its moral effect, however, will last as

* A significant proof of the very limited scope of the Dual Alliance has been furnished by the attitude of the Russian Press (which would not have been tolerated by the authorities if it had run counter to their own views) upon the French seizure of Mitylene to compel the Sultan to satisfy a number of French pecuniary and political claims. "It has naturally been assumed abroad," wrote the St. Petersburg correspondent of the *Times*, "that France has not acted as she has done without the approval of Russia, even if she has not been guided by the advice of her powerful ally. The attitude of the Russian Press renders this view untenable. . . . The action of France in taking direct and energetic measures to punish the Sultan for his insolent evasions is regarded without sympathy, and even with disapproval and alarm." Moreover, the charge that Russia, the ally of France, and Russia alone, supported the Sultan against the legitimate and unaggressive demands of France, has just been made with great weight and directness by a high French authority. Professor Victor Bérard, of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, a well-known writer upon foreign politics, in the *Revue de Paris* for December 15, 1901, analyses the European situation to find out by whose support the Sultan was encouraged to resist France to the last moment, and this is his answer: "One Power alone appeared to hesitate, and for two months of the ten weeks of the Turk's obstinacy withheld its opinion. It was not till early in November that we learned from an official note that M. Zinovieff (Russian Ambassador in Constantinople) had in person urgently advised the Palace and the Porte to yield to the French injunctions."

long as the present Tsar fills the throne of Russia and continues to resist the reactionary and bellicose among his own surroundings. In any case, it has hitherto been an alliance of peace, and on that ground the future will call it blessed.

The relations of Russia and Germany make a very different story. They are concerned with the future, and with a coming situation possibly more delicate and more pregnant than anything since the fall of the first Napoleon—a situation, moreover, that may burst upon us any day between night and morning.

To understand this, it is necessary to look back a little. The keynote of Bismarck's foreign policy was—keep on good terms with Russia. To that he subordinated, and, if needful, was ready to sacrifice, every other German interest abroad. For that, he went so far as to play a crooked game with Germany's chief partner in the Triple Alliance. For that, he contemptuously declared that the Balkans were "not worth the bones of a Prussian grenadier," because Russia desired to extend her influence there. For that, he even condoned that barefaced outrage, the Russian plot to kidnap Prince Alexander of Bulgaria, a German Prince. For that, he inspired his reptile press to stir up ill-will with England, and himself even launched a most offensive insult against the British royal house, because he knew that Russia would be instantly alarmed by a *rapprochement* between Germany and England, but would remain on good terms with a Germany which occasionally growled across the North Sea. At the same time, he took good care to keep Russia convinced that if Germany wished it, she could at any time have an alliance with England, and therefore he managed that the relations of Germany with England should remain at the stage of a vague irritation, and not take on such an aspect of irremediable rupture as would naturally tempt Russia to seek in England an ally against Germany—the astonishing and

almost shocking obsequiousness of British policy toward Germany making his task an easy one. So strongly were both States permeated with this Bismarckian policy of a Russo-German understanding that a dying Tsar and a dying Kaiser alike urged it upon their successors. Indeed, it appeared rooted in German policy, and when the Russian Foreign Minister once remarked to Bismarck that he had every confidence in him, but was he sure that his own position was secure, the Iron Chancellor replied indignantly that his Imperial master had perfect confidence in him, and that he would assuredly only lay down his office with his life.

Such were the relations of Russia and Germany up to a short time after William II. ascended the throne. How simply and suddenly he "dropped the old pilot" in 1890 is well known. The dismissed and astounded Bismarck never forgave his Emperor, and the closing years of his life were deeply stained by an unparalleled series of malevolent interviews, inspired articles, and deliberate breaches of confidence, all intended to prove that Germany's policy had become anti-Russian, and that nothing but disaster awaited the Fatherland in consequence. But William II. went on his way unmoved, and bit by bit his policy and his ambitions have been revealed to students of European affairs. They are original, daring, and gigantic. Moreover, he has, up to the present, succeeded at every step. But the crucial time has not yet come. When it does come, he will possibly be found to have been aiming at nothing less than a transformation of the map of Europe, and an extension of the German Imperial sphere, in comparison with which the annexation of Elsass and Lothringen was, from the standpoint of national economics, but like adding a potato-patch to a dukedom.

I do not mean that after he had dismissed Bismarck the Kaiser adopted a frankly anti-Russian policy. That would have been as contrary to his own diplomatic methods as it would

have been distasteful to his people and dangerous to the security of his Empire. On the contrary, he endeavoured to combine all the advantages of a good understanding with Russia, with the advantage also to be found in complete freedom of political action. "The incessant movement of his imagination," as an anonymous writer has recently said, "presents him in turn with equally persuasive pictures of incompatible designs." But Alexander III. was no lover of Germany and the Germans, as Alexander II. had been; moreover, he was a convinced Panslavist, and Panslavism and hatred of Germany are at the end of the same road. Therefore the Kaiser set himself, with such a Tsar in Russia, an impossible task. No doubt it was in large part to secure closer relations with Russia that he took the very strong step of throwing aside all his previous sympathy with Japan, and joining Russia and France in forcing her to give up a large part of the fruits of her victorious war with China. This step involved many fateful consequences, several of which are still to come. It involved the seizure of Kiao-chao and Port Arthur, and the cession of Wei-hai-wei; the virtual annexation of Manchuria by Russia; the change of route of the Great Siberian Railway; and, indeed, it may fairly be said to have been the cause, even if indirectly, of the Boxer rising and all that came in its train. Moreover, it has left Russia and Japan face to face under conditions in which war is only too possible an outcome.

Naturally Russia was much gratified by the Emperor William's course, but her gratitude, probably to his lively disappointment, took no material form. He thereupon proceeded to help himself to advantages in the Far East which he had failed to secure by the good-will of his temporary ally. With the murder of some German missionaries as a pretext, he boldly seized upon Kiao-chao and announced that Shan-tung was a German sphere of interest. The Foreign Offices of Europe were led to believe that Russia was a consenting party to this

course, and consequently they failed to unite in the protest which would assuredly have been made if they had known that Germany was taking isolated action. This incident strained Russo-German relations very severely, as (to depart for a moment from chronological order) did the precisely similar stratagem by which the command of the international forces in China was secured for Count von Waldersee. On this occasion, too, Europe was given to understand that Russia's consent had been obtained—indeed, that the suggestion of the German Field-Marshal had originated with her. The German version was specifically repudiated later in a Russian official document, and the circumstances are believed to have been the subject of a private and personal explanation by the Kaiser to the Tsar.

From all these events—to say nothing of the two visits of the Emperor William to England and his enthusiastic reception there—it will be clear that the relations between Russia and Germany must now be widely different from what they were in Bismarckian days. And to complete the picture so far, must be added the conviction in St. Petersburg that Germany is about to impose an increased duty upon the import of Russian cereals. If this be done, Russia has already bluntly declared that she will retaliate—a tariff war.

In the foregoing, however, we have hardly yet touched upon the real and fundamental causes which are moulding the relations of Russia and Germany to-day. These are not isolated incidents or personal encounters, but new springs of national policy, new drifts of racial development. The fact—as Russia sees it—is that Germany has deliberately placed herself athwart Russian policy in each one of the three paths along which Russian statesmen desire that their country should enjoy an unimpeded progress. These three paths lie in the Far East, the Near East, and toward the Persian Gulf. Here, then, we at last touch the danger-zone of contemporary European politics,

and the most important factor in the future of the Russian Empire.

I have already spoken of German action, *vis à vis* Russia, in the Far East. It may be summed up as a claim to share a position which Russia has regarded as predestined to be hers alone. Germany has come into North China; she has established a naval base there and appropriated a province; she secured—by sharp practice, as Russia thinks—the conspicuous leadership of the European nations; she has concluded with England an open Convention which, in spite of assurances to the contrary, means that under certain circumstances, she is pledged to join in opposition to Russian designs; she now maintains a considerable naval force in Far Eastern waters; she has, in a word, given Russia clearly to understand that any further extension of Russian power in China must either "square" Germany or overcome her opposition, and this is a new, a serious, and a wholly unexpected obstacle in the path of Russian policy.

German activity in the Near East is a much darker cloud still upon the Russian horizon. Events there have moved for a long time precisely as Russia has desired, and her desires there are deeply rooted in the aspirations and confident hopes of her people. Turkey has slowly but steadily decayed. The Russian Ambassador at Constantinople has been the power behind the throne. Step by step Bulgaria, which, under the ferocious patriotism of Stambolof, barred the Russian advance in the Balkans, has been brought back under Muscovite influence. Stambolof's strong and busy hands, chopped off in front of his own house, are preserved by his wife in a jar of spirits; his murderers, well known to everybody, have never been punished; little Prince Boris was baptized into the Greek Church; Russia has lent Bulgaria money, and has once more sent her officers to the Bulgarian army; Prince Ferdinand has been permitted to entertain a Russian Grand Duke in a Bulgarian port, and

the next steps will be his reception by the Tsar in St. Petersburg, his remarriage with a Russian or pro-Russian princess, and the elevation of Bulgaria into a kingdom.

All this has come about precisely as Russia desired. So, too, with Servia, hitherto jealously dominated by Austria. The King and Queen of Servia are about to visit the Tsar and Tsaritsa, and the Tsar was prepared to be godfather to the expected but mythical heir. Panslavism is rejoicing, too, in the coming joint session of the Bulgarian and Servian parliaments, with its probable resolution of affection for Russia. Prince Nicholas of Montenegro remains the devoted friend of the Tsar, as he was of his father, and his influence is naturally much greater now that his daughter is Queen of Italy. Only Roumania preserves her diplomatic independence of Russia, and, indeed, has just concluded a military convention with Austria. With this single exception, the obstacles to a Russian advance to Constantinople had gradually been removed, when suddenly it dawned upon an astonished Europe and an indignant Russia that the Kaiser's "mailed fist" had obtruded itself into the way. During the Armenian massacres Germany, with calculated and placid indifference, declined to speak or act. The Turkish army was supplied from German factories with cannon and ammunition; when she took the field against Greece a German general drew up the plan of campaign; and the Turkish council of war at Elassona followed German advice day by day. (I was a prisoner in that camp for several hours shortly before the outbreak of war, so I am not speaking without some personal knowledge.) The Kaiser's brother-in-law, the Crown Prince of Greece, commanded the Greek army against the irresistible combination of Turkish troops and German tactics, while the Kaiser's sister wept bitterly over her brother's ruthless indifference toward her adopted country. For a while Germany contributed one second-rate warship to the blockade of Crete, and finally withdrew even that. The Kaiser

has made a triumphal progress in Constantinople and in Asia Minor. Finally, the way being thus carefully made ready, Germany, with confident audacity and entire success, took the step for which all the rest had been but preparation, and openly thrust her line of policy not only across the ambitions of Russia but into the very kernel and heart of Russia's most cherished plan. I allude, of course, to the concession by the Sultan to a German company of the right to build a railway from the Bosphorus to the Persian Gulf, *viâ* Baghdad, the momentous scheme I have already described in detail when writing of Russian railway expansion in Central Asia.* Russian official resentment of what is regarded as a deliberate invasion of her own sphere, a project which can succeed only at the expense of her own most cherished ambition, is great, while the Russian Press emits a most unusual note of pessimism. "The German invasion of Asiatic Turkey," says the *Novoye Vremya*, "goes steadily forward, always and undeviatingly forward, whilst Russia, unfortunately, looks on as a silent and helpless spectator at the gradual destruction of her interests and the dissipation of her hopes in Asia Minor." And the *Sviet* is permitted to launch its tiny thunderbolt straight at the head of the Kaiser himself. "Day after day," it declares, "the Emperor William is dealing Russia blows severely felt." "The Persian Gulf," adds the *Novosti*, "is to be the question of the near future to the exclusion of all other world problems." So acrimonious is Russian criticism of everything German just now that the *Novoye Vremya*, by far the most important paper in the Empire, recently declared it to be "credibly alleged" that the German agents at Haidar Pasha of the Baghdad railway "fired the properties in order to clear a site for the company's railway station, depôts, engine-sheds, &c., and with the further economic purpose of acquiring the land at a very low price"!

* See Chapter XVII., and for Russian expansion toward Persia the concluding part of Chapter XIV.

To understand this indignation, it should be remembered that it springs not only from this serious direct issue, but also from the even more menacing underlying indirect issue. The former is the determination of Russia to secure at any cost the control of Persia and a naval and maritime outlet upon the Persian Gulf. Persia is perfectly helpless before her, she is virtually mistress in Tehran, her plans for railway extension from the Caucasus (as shown upon my map) are being rapidly pushed forward, and she has surveyed the route for her own railway through Persia to the Gulf. This extension she regards as a matter of life and death—so much so that her leading newspaper recently declared that if England would consent to this, every other issue between the two countries could be settled amicably and at once. But the indirect and greater issue is the German Emperor's patronage and even protection of the Sultan of Turkey, of which this Baghdad railway concession is only one result. Russian diplomacy, usually so perspicuous, failed to foresee this. Turkey, since the Armenian massacres, was believed to have no powerful friend in Europe, and her gradual disintegration was counted as one of the factors of Russian foreign policy. In fact, the Russian ambassador at Constantinople often appeared to act more like the Resident in a Protected State than the representative of one Sovereign at the Court of another. The injury to Russian plans by the German blow was therefore the more galling because of the surprise with which this was struck.*

* This aspect of the relations between Russia, Germany, and Turkey, is becoming the subject of frequent comment in the capitals of Europe. For instance, while writing the above I read these two telegrams in the *Times* :—

"There has been throughout Europe for some years past an uneasy feeling that, for political objects of her own, Germany has been in the habit of encouraging the Sultan to offer resistance to the just representations of the Powers to a degree which confronted them with the alternatives of being fooled or of seeming to endanger the peace of Europe by deserved measures of coercion."—*Berlin correspondent*, November 5.

"Russia looks upon the Sultan as naturally and of right dependent upon her. It is to her that he must look for support if he needs it. It is from her that he must

It will thus be seen that the relations of Russia with Germany are highly critical. If the Emperor William persists in the scheme he has so grandly conceived and, up to the present, pushed forward with extraordinary skill—and he is not the man to be frightened from his ardently desired goal—a rupture of the traditional relations between Berlin and St. Petersburg may not be far off.* I need not point out what an opportunity this situation affords to England, if she finds a statesman with insight and courage to take advantage of it. The more so, as she holds in her hands for the moment the key to the building of this Baghdad railway, which cannot receive its guarantee from the Sultan unless he is permitted to raise the Turkish tariff.†

dread punishment for any wrong which he may have committed. The attempts of the German Emperor to take the Sultan under his own immediate protection in exchange for commercial and financial concessions have throughout been regarded here with unconcealed indignation."—*St. Petersburg correspondent*, November 9.

* A significant feature in the foreign relations of Russia are the two purely strategical railway she is building toward the frontier of Galicia. One, intended to facilitate the concentration of troops from Southern Russia on the extreme south of Galicia, is obviously directed to the Balkans and Austria. The more remarkable one, however, farther north, is a military measure against either Austria or Germany – indeed, one account declares that it is being constructed at the instance of the French General Staff as a condition of the last Russian loan in France! It starts from Bologoye (to which a line comes from Kostroma), midway on the line from St. Petersburg to Moscow and runs *viâ* Ostashkof, Toropetz, Luki, Polotsk, and Volkovisk, to Siedlce (Syedlets), close to the Russian frontier which is thrust between Prussia and Austria. The expropriation of the land for this line was ordered by an Imperial *ukaz* dated September 14, 1901, it is to be finished by next February, engineers and navvies are said to have been recalled from the surveys of the proposed Moscow-Kistin railway to work upon it, and eight thousand labourers from the depressed agricultural districts placed upon it at the expense of the Ministry of War. This railway, as I have said, is purely strategical, and this aspect of it is enormously emphasised by the fact that it terminates midway between and close to the two great fortresses of Brest-Litovsk and Novogeorgievsk (formerly Modlin, twenty miles from Warsaw), the most strongly fortified portion of the Russian Empire, the site of the "Polish Quadrilateral." It is an inevitable conclusion that if Russia has suddenly decided that her immensely strong position hereabouts is not strong enough, she must be contemplating the possibility of immediate and dangerous tension with one or other of her two neighbours across this frontier.

† I cannot help thinking there is some reason to fear that Lord Salisbury has recently concluded another secret convention of some kind with Germany. If so, nobody knows what is in it, and Englishmen can only hope that this concession to

With Austria, no less than with Germany, have Russia's relations recently undergone a rapid and a vital change. For a number of years past peace has been guaranteed in the Balkans —the powder-magazine of Europe—by the common decision of St. Petersburg and Vienna that they would not allow it to be broken. Indeed it was preposterous that these semi-civilised little Sates, sizzling with ill-digested ambition, ignorant, reckless, ceaselessly intriguing, should be able at any moment to precipitate a situation in which two mighty empires might find themselves irresistibly dragged into a colossal and ruinous war. Therefore Russia and Austria, having decided that this should not be, proceeded to communicate their decision to Servia and Bulgaria in terms that left no room for misunderstanding, and Europe breathed freely. It was tacitly understood that Austria would not interfere in Bulgaria, while Russia recognised that Servia must be more or less under Austrian influence.

It will be remembered that the freedom of Bulgaria was the result of the Russo-Turkish War, and that Servia was saved from Bulgaria during the war between the two by the appearance of Graf von Khevenhüller, Austrian Consul-General at Belgrad, at the Bulgarian outposts beyond Pirot, announcing to Prince Alexander that if he advanced farther he would find not Servian but Austrian bayonets in his front. Thus each of the two Great Powers had a kind of prescriptive right to exercise influence over one of the two little Balkan States.

Roumania did not come under this arrangement, for though she fought with Russia against Turkey, and, indeed, according to Moltke, saved the Russian army from the loss of the results of one whole campaign, she was alienated by her treatment by Russia at the close of the war, and she has been virtually a member of the Triple Alliance for a good many years. Roumania

Germany—with another to be mentioned in connection with Austria—is not part of the price they will have to pay for the Kaiser's conspicuous and unwavering neutrality during the war in South Africa. The "honest broker" does not usually work for nothing.

is the most civilised and the most powerful of the Balkan countries, and so far from Russia having gained influence there, the only result of the growth of Russian influence in the Balkans is that Roumania has just concluded a new military convention —or, more probably, confirmed an old one—with Austria. So significant is this last act, that the *Reichswehr*, the semi-official journal of the Austro-Hungarian army, has published the following remarkable comments :

"It is only in case a Balkan situation were created which would be directed against Austria and Roumania, as also Greece, which is affiliated to the latter country, that what is now described as the Austro-Roumanian Military Convention, which, perhaps, exists on paper, would acquire a practical significance. At the present juncture it is certainly a suspicious circumstance that Bulgaria, Servia, and Montenegro should make such extravagant efforts to manifest their devotion to Russia. It is, for the moment, impossible to say how far this policy of flattery will prove successful ; but it is conceivable that under Panslavist influence it may one day lead to a regrettable disturbance of Austro-Russian relations."

But gradually, as Russia has resumed her old paramountcy in Bulgaria, which Stambolof destroyed, this Austro-Russian understanding has worn thin, and Russia has begun to trench upon Austria's sphere in Servia. The Tsar's wedding-present to Queen Draga will be remembered, and I have mentioned his intention to be god-father to the heir who never appeared. The late King Milan had a personal feud with Prince Nicholas of Montenegro, the fine old mountain-fighter who belongs, body and soul, to Russia, but King Alexander has just withdrawn his military attaché from Vienna to send him to Cettigne, the little Montenegrin capital. In fact, the Russian Press now uses language on this subject which a few years ago would have caused the immediate suppression of the newspaper printing it. A leading St. Petersburg journal of Panslavist views, for instance,

speaks of the meeting of the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich and Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria as "the canonisation of Russia's eternal and fraternal friendship with her loyal kindred of the Balkan States" (note the plural), and adds that Russia has now addressed herself to the task of eliminating most thoroughly "the baneful Hapsburg incubus," not only from the independent Balkan States, but even from the peoples which still "languish under the oppressive sway" of Austro-Hungary. Frankness could go no farther, unless it be in this precise summary of the Balkan situation published in the *Sviet*: "The present grouping of the Powers—that is to say, the union of Russia, Servia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and France in one idea—affords ample protection against the union of Austria-Hungary, Germany, Roumania, and Greece. Russia must keep watch on the whole of Slavdom, and cannot allow it to be either wholly or partly Germanised or Magyarised."

Rumours of wars form such a large part of the atmosphere of the Balkan Peninsula that it is never wise to attach much importance to them there, but beyond question there is at the present moment a stronger feeling of alarm among serious observers than has existed for many years, and this is caused not so much by an obvious weakening of the Austro-Russian agreement as by the actual events which have ensued. Russia has increased her troops along the Pruth—river of fateful memory—and in other places and ways, including a curious display of her naval power along the Black Sea coast and on the lower Danube, has shown an activity which it is difficult to reconcile with a desire to maintain the *status quo*. And the Austrian Press draws pointed attention to the frequent meetings of General Larovary, the Roumanian Commander-in-chief, and Baron von Beck, chief of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff. Probably neither on one side nor the other is there anything more than the development of ordinary military preparations, but even these, amid so many explosive elements as the Balkans contain,

are causing a new and distinct uneasiness and putting a certain strain upon the relations of Russia and Austria.

There is, however, one other impending question, rarely mentioned yet in current comment, which may affect—and at any moment—the relations of these two nations. I allude to the situation which will arise upon the death of the aged Austrian Emperor and the consequent action that Germany may take. We enter here upon the region of political speculation, though not without several definite and striking utterances to guide us. The Austrian Empire is of course a congeries of States of widely differing origins and language, for the most part on bad terms with one another, only held together by the purely political and accidental bond of the Hapsburg Crown and, to an even greater degree, by the personality of the Emperor Franz Josef. Even Hungary, which is politically a separate kingdom, having its own king crowned in Buda, and only sharing its foreign affairs, customs, and army with Austria, cannot agree with the latter over the periodical *Ausgleich.* As for the other races of the Dual Empire—Germans, Czechs (Bohemian Slavs), Poles, Ruthenians, Serbs, Croats and the rest, all hope of peace among them is now virtually abandoned. Every kind of concession and coercion has been applied in turn, but the abominable scenes of disorder in the Parliament at Vienna are a reflection of what exists throughout the land. Austria is in a state of general ill-veiled rebellion. The next and only remaining step will be the suppression by the Crown of representative institutions, followed by absolute government.

Now the great racial struggle is in Bohemia, between two million Germans and four million Czechs. Other warring interests are comparatively unimportant. The Czechs are of course backed by their fellow Slavs in the Empire, and the Germans by Vienna, with its almost exclusively Hebrew and extremely influential capitalist ring. Between Czechs and

Germans nothing less than a deadly hatred prevails, and both are disloyal to Austria.

Each of the rivals, it must next be observed, is included in a great politico-racial movement outside its own country. Russian Panslavism of course includes the Czechs, though they do not altogether reciprocate the feeling, as Panslavism carries with it the doctrines of the Russian Greek Church, and the Czechs are by no means all orthodox. But they are infinitely nearer to this than to German Lutheranism. What, now, is the corresponding movement which includes the Germans ? A precisely similar, though not nearly so well-known aspiration, called Pan-Germanism, already wide-spread and deeply-rooted both in Germany and Austria. It has its great leaders, its organisation, its newspapers, its famous atlas, its flag ; and unless many signs fail, it possesses the sympathy and enjoys the support of no less a power than the Kaiser himself. Its racial object is simple : Germany to include all German-speaking countries. Its political objects are equally simple and strikingly concrete. Sir Rowland Blennerhassett describes them as follows : " This party now openly desires the break-up of the Austrian Empire, the annexation of all the German portions of Austria by Germany, and the extension of the German Empire to the Adriatic." And another well-informed writer upon this topic, Mr. W. B. Duffield, says : " The successful prosecution of German ambition means that Trieste is to be a German port, and the Adriatic a German lake," and with this " the imposition of a universal monarchy in German lands." And the latter truly remarks that it is impossible to read these words which the Kaiser spoke at Bonn on April 24 in any but a Pan-German sense : " Why did the old Empire come to naught ? Because the old Empire was not founded on a strong national basis. The universal idea of the old Roman Kingdom did not allow the German nation developments in a German national sense. *The essential of the nation is a demarcation outwardly corresponding to the personality*

of a people and its racial peculiarity." One must be stupider even than Heine said the Germans of his day were, to misunderstand such a plain hint as this, and, indeed, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, the Archduke Ferdinand, understood it well enough, for he retorted in a speech which startled Europe, calling upon the Roman Catholic forces of the Empire to rally to its defence. For this racial and political struggle involves a religious conflict also. The Pan-German propaganda is evangelical, and one of its wings is the *Los von Rom*—"Cut loose from Rome!"—movement, directed against the Catholicism of the House of Hapsburg and its adherents, and the great majority of the Czechs. Dr. Engel, one of the Czech leaders, characterised this movement by the remark that as Germany has no use for Austrian Catholics she is trying to convert Austria to Protestantism, and Dr. Lueger, the famous Anti-Semite burgomaster of Vienna, declares that by proselytism it is intended to facilitate the absorption of Austria by the German Empire.

This politico-religious propaganda is carried on in Germany with a frankness almost amounting to effrontery, for in the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar a house-to-house collection for the *Los von Rom* movement has been permitted, and at the recent General Assembly of the Evangelical Alliance held at Breslau a resolution was passed beginning as follows: "The fourteenth General Assembly of the Evangelical Alliance expresses its grateful satisfaction at the blessed progress of the evangelical movement in Austria"! It is not surprising that the heir to the throne of Austria, the strongest remaining royal support of the Papacy, should sound a call to arms in face of such an attack, from beyond the frontier, on both the dynasty and the official faith of his country.

If the ambition of Germany has really assumed these gigantic proportions, the situation in which it must seek realisation may arise at the death of a monarch now aged seventy-one. It

is therefore impossible to exaggerate the seriousness of the prospect, or indeed the extreme delicacy and danger of the international complication that would be thus produced. Russia is not prepared, either from a purely military or from a financial point of view, to fight Germany; but such considerations have never kept her back yet, and it may reasonably be doubted whether she would not plunge the whole Balkan Peninsula into war, and perhaps even the whole of Europe, rather than see her mightiest military neighbour so vastly aggrandised in territory, in population, in wealth, and in sea-power. At any rate, we see here Panslavism claiming the Austrian Czechs, and Pan-Germanism claiming the Austrian Germans, and this definite rivalry already constitutes one of the most momentous and puzzling factors in the relations of Russia with the nations.

Two other countries may be more briefly mentioned in connection with Russia. There has been for long in the United States a belief that Russia is a genuine, sympathetic friend, moved by admiration for the American people and their institutions. This has grown up chiefly, I suppose, from the apocryphal narratives of the readiness of Russia to intervene on the side of right during the war of the Rebellion. Therefore the American people have frequently made public profession of their friendship for Russia, which Russia, needless to say, has cordially accepted, for who would refuse such a gift? The whole belief is a political soap-bubble. It is nothing but a bright film in the ether. Russia likes to appear a friend of the United States, because the effect of that is to postpone any co-operation of England and America in world affairs—a contingency which Russia is not the only Power to fear. But beyond this, she seldom thinks of the United States, except to admire and envy its vast prosperity; among the official and reactionary class, to regard its institutions with profound

disapproval; to anticipate the time when enough cotton will be growu in Turkestan to make it safe for her to put a prohibitive tax upon every American bale; or to wish that the American billionaires would invest a few spare millions in Government guaranteed 4 per cent. bonds of Russian railways—and, let me add, if I were a billionaire I should meet the Russian wish this respect, for there is no better investment at such an interest in Europe. Beyond these things, America does not exist for Russia, except when a troublesome Secretary of State puts a series of direct questions about Manchuria or the Open Door, and insists upon answers in writing. In fact, Russia, with no ill-will at all, thinks about America precisely what a great religious autocracy *must* think about a huge secular democracy four thousand miles away. The rest is mere flag-wagging, and for my own part, when I see an American newspaper lauding Russian love for the United States, I cannot help asking myself, knowing what I know, why that particular newspaper goes out of its way to disseminate that particular view.

About Japan, on the contrary, Russia thinks night and day. When, with the help of France and Germany, she had unceremoniously kicked Japan out of Port Arthur and off the mainland of China, Russia probably thought that she had done with the little island-Empire for a long time. But Japan thought otherwise, and proceeded to lay out a programme of naval and military expansion due to mature a short time before the Trans-Siberian Railway was to be completed. Many things have conspired to hinder the progress of the great railway, but Japan's military and naval schemes have gone steadily onward, in spite of all financial difficulties. To-day she has a magnificent navy, including some of the most powerful battleships afloat, stronger than any fleet Russia could safely send to the Far East, while her army is at least equal in numbers, and superior in equipment and scientific training, to the land forces Russia could muster on the Eastern side of her vast dominions. And be-

tween the two nations there lies Korea—a territorial deadlock, a political antinomy. Russia cannot allow Japan to have it, for that would give her Eastern border a land frontier to a military Power. Japan cannot allow Russia to have it, for that would leave her island-home almost within gunshot of the troops and the naval bases of the Colossus of the North, and deprive her of an outlet for her overflowing population. At present Japan is gaining, for her influence and her people and her trade are increasing in Korea every day.

Russia has not failed to propose a division of interests to Japan. The latter was assured that war with Russia meant ruin, whereas an understanding meant a long era of tranquillity. Japan, it was proposed, should have a free hand in Korea, and in return should undertake not to impede Russia in Manchuria. But Russia must have a naval base on the south coast of Korea, as a half-way house between Vladivostok and Port Arthur. With striking unanimity the Japanese Press has declined these semi-official overtures. In the first place, they say, Korea does not belong to Russia to give away ; on the contrary, other Powers are interested in the Far East, and Japan and Russia have a treaty guarding each of them against the aggression of the other in that country. And a Russian naval base in Japanese waters is precisely what Japan most strenuously objects to. Finally, Japan does not wish Manchuria to be closed to trade, and does not herself desire to annex Korea, being quite satisfied with its present status and her own position there.* And as if to clinch this last argument, comes the news that Korea has ceded to Japan, for a special settlement, 650 acres, formerly surveyed and pegged out by a Russian warship, at Cha-pok-pho, near Ma-sam-pho, to be policed by Japan.

It is a very delicate situation, and Russia would give a good deal for a diplomatic escape from this naval and military anxiety.

* See an interesting letter from the well-known Tokyo correspondent of the *Times*, November 8, 1901.

Her view of it is shown by the fact that the best part of her navy is in the Far East. Japan, too, would be thankful to be relieved from the financial burden thus imposed upon her. But the question of the closing of Manchuria to non-Russian trade, with all its consequences, blocks the way, more even than that of the status of Korea. Russia is unlikely to forego this, and Japan will not forego her freedom to join any international action that may ultimately be taken—indeed she will not do anything which would prevent her from taking single-handed action, if her fate should so cast the die.

Such, then, in necessarily brief outline and with one exception, are the relations of Russia, as a great whole, with the different nations surrounding her, upon whose attitudes and actions her future must in a large part depend. It will have been seen that the problems awaiting her—perhaps close at hand—are neither few nor simple, but that they will demand all her judgment, all her diplomacy, all her prestige, and possibly all her resources, to solve them to her advantage, while some of them are so bound up with her national security and well-being that a mistake in handling them might throw her back for generations. The exception is, of course, the future course of events between Russia and the British Empire, and this, with certain broad conclusions about Russia which must affect it, is naturally the subject of a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XXV

RUSSIA AND ENGLAND

THERE remains the last and greatest of Russia's foreign relationships. England—what of this long-existent and traditional rivalry? Is not mutual enmity rooted in the hearts of both peoples? Do not their statesmen take this nightmare of predestined war to bed with them every night, and wake every morning to find it wide-eyed upon their pillows? Has not a library of books been written in both languages to show to demonstration that Briton and Muscovite must inevitably come to the death-grip? In fact, are not England and Russia, by the eternal nature of things—

> Like rival thunders from opposèd poles,
> Rushing toward the shock that splits the world?

I have long held and advocated a contrary opinion, and now that I have seen much more of Russia that opinion has been confirmed almost to the point of certainty. I am profoundly convinced that a good and lasting understanding between the two nations is not only desirable above all things, but also well within the range of possibility. When Lord Rosebery's government was defeated seven years ago this *entente* was virtually in sight. "Nous sommes à la veille du partage," said a great Russian statesman-soldier in office to an English official friend of mine with whom he was discussing the situation. Moreover, notwithstanding that the latest books on the subject are violently anti-Russian, the number of people sharing this opinion has largely increased, and if our statesmen had

been stronger (and younger) men, we should ere this have been on the road to an understanding, for Lord Salisbury has confessed that the anti-Russian, pro-Turkish policy of Lord Beaconsfield was "putting our money on the wrong horse;" and Mr. Balfour has pointedly remarked that "Asia is big enough for both." Their words flew up, but their thoughts remained below, and officially we are as suspicious of Russia as ever, and Russia is equally disgusted with our unformed, incalculable, spasmodic policy. Therefore she goes calmly ahead, doing what she pleases, taking what she wants, knowing that in all probability when England alone desires or opposes anything, a few acid despatches and a little calling of names in Parliament will be the worst she has to fear. In diplomacy Russia plays a strong game, and plays it sometimes without scruples; but she both respects and likes an opponent who plays his own game strongly too, and she does not demand in others a higher standard of scrupulousness than she follows herself. Before I had set foot in European Russia my conviction rested upon examination of the various divergent and convergent interests of the two countries; to-day it rests also upon positive knowledge that the ablest and most powerful statesmen of Russia would welcome a definite and far-reaching reconciliation and adjustment, if they could be convinced of British sincerity and consistency. Anybody, moreover, who knows what the *Novoye Vremya* is will see what a change has come over Russian opinion when that journal publishes a series of lengthy articles from the pen of M. Siromyatnikof, a much-respected publicist, advocating an Anglo-Russian agreement and warning his fellow-countrymen against the "costly assistance of the 'honest brokers' in Berlin." At any rate the greatest personal forces in Russia are on the side of such a policy, upon the condition I have mentioned above. I assert this as a fact within my own knowledge.

There are only three parts of the world where serious obstacles

are held to exist—China, India, and Persia, and each of these calls for distinct consideration. In China, Russia has virtually got what she wants, namely, the control of Manchuria and a free rail-route to a fortified harbour upon the open sea. The Manchurian Convention is not yet signed, but it certainly will be in some form or other, though Russia has lost her friend at court by the death of Li Hung-chang, who was a paid Russian agent and who, in the negotiations for the settlement, was acting all the time in the interest of Russia. He served her well—as he had often done before, and as Gordon long ago foretold that he would.* The manufacturing nations of the world will have made a grave mistake if they permit Russia to close Manchuria to non-Russian trade, as they will discover in time. So little do they care for their own commercial interests, and indeed their own prestige, that even now Russia still maintains her military seizure of the international custom-house (for it is that, though nominally Chinese) at the only Manchurian sea-port. Common representations by Great Britain, the United States, and Japan could at one time without difficulty have saved for the world the trade of Manchuria, but the opportunity appears to have slipped by, though Japan is still unreconciled to the fact, whatever shape the settlement between Russia and China may take, and though negotiations are still proceeding on the subject. Of the conduct of British policy in the Chinese question during the past five years I can hardly trust myself to speak: I believe that the historian of the next generation will regard it as the grossest neglect of the national interests within his knowledge. But to all appearances the evil is done: Russia virtually has Manchuria, and also Mongolia, with its enormously valuable gold-mines, now being privately exploited by a semi-official Russian group. Russia being thus palpably replete in China, there should be no great difficulty in persuading her to admit the fact. The

* See "The People and Politics of the Far East," p. 26.

losers in the game may perhaps find some consolation in the reflection that Russia—as some of her statesmen keenly realise—has undertaken a responsibility the end of which is not yet. The "yellow peril" exists in truth for her, with thousands of miles of frontier coterminous with China, and to be colonised by scattered settlements of Russian peasants hardly superior in civilisation to the Chinese, with whom they may well develop relationships far more intimate than will be pleasing to their rulers. And China has profited in military matters from her late experience; she has by no means lost prestige in her own eyes—rather the reverse; she is arming with speed and with knowledge; and Russia, with its sources of human and material supply on the other side of the world, is her neighbour. If one were looking for a motto for Russia's triumphal relations to two Chinese provinces, I am not sure that it would not be, *Habes tota quod mente petisti, infelix.*

I turn to India, where most people believe that the real strain and danger between the British and Russian Empires lie. The intention of Russia to invade India has been for generations an accepted commonplace, due probably most of all to the idea expressed in Sir Henry Rawlinson's remark that "any one who traces the movements of Russia toward India on the map of Asia cannot fail to be struck with the resemblance which these movements bear to the operations of an army opening parallels against a beleaguered fortress." This is very true, but it must be remembered, first, that some of these movements date back a considerable time, when the situation of Russia in world-politics was very different from what it is to-day; second, that in many of these movements commercial development was beyond question the chief, if not the sole aim—an aim which, be it added, results have abundantly justified; and third, that others of these movements have been forced upon

Russia by the necessity of keeping order beyond her borders —a natural and inevitable process to which much of the expansion of the British Empire has also been due.

This question of Russia's intentions with regard to India has been present to my mind in every conversation I have ever held with a Russian whose opinion was worth hearing. I have endeavoured to study every fact bearing upon it, and after long consideration I have come to the conclusion that the colossal and perilous undertaking of an armed invasion of India, with a view to conquest, is not part of the plan of any really responsible Russian, either statesman or soldier. Of course a great many Russians, nearly all their newspapers, and a large majority of Russian officers, believe not only that Russia intends to do this, but that she will. In Russia, however, public opinion and newspapers count for very little, and ninety-nine per cent. of officers not at all, so far as national policy is concerned. It would be roughly true to say that every Russian officer up to the rank of colonel believes firmly that the invasion of India is possible, probable, and desirable, while every one above the rank of colonel has learned that as a military operation it is practically impossible, and that as a political move it would be the climax of folly. In Central Asia almost every Russian knows to a month or two when he will get his marching orders for Kabul—the time is generally close at hand; in St. Petersburg the very few men who really influence the course of Russian affairs will not waste their scanty leisure in discussing the question with you—they sincerely regard you as quite an outsider, diplomatically speaking, if you desire to raise it. I have talked with some of these really responsible men, and I sincerely believe the most influential of all would not have India at a gift. Above them all, too, is the Tsar, compared with whose decision little else matters, and his Majesty is a man of peace, not only from the deep conviction that Russia, like other countries, needs the sunshine of peace for her own growth, but

also from the highest moral and humanitarian motives. Upon this point there are not two opinions among those in a position to know. Moreover, if Russia had desired to make a move toward India why has she remained inactive during two years of perfect opportunity? We have had no army in England; our army in Africa could not spare a man; our army in India, though more seasoned and better trained owing to its prolonged absence from home, has not been at its normal peace strength; the entire Continent has been raging and imagining vain things against us; we were without an ally in the world; the death of the Amir of Afghanistan made everything in that country uncertain for a moment; never was there—never can there again be—such a chance for an unscrupulous enemy to strike at us by land. And in spite of all the warring naval schools we cannot defend the North-west Frontier by sea. Yet Russia has not shown the slightest desire to take advantage of our embarrassment or our defeats, and it is certain that her commercial crisis would not have kept her back if she thought her national policy demanded action. I venture to say that the Emperor of Russia and his principal advisers have by their attitude since October 1899, given England a striking and unequivocal proof of the absence of any hostile intention, if not of the presence of positive friendliness. I should be happy if I could point to any similar evidence of British consideration for Russia.

The truth is, in my opinion, that Russia regards her position on the Indian frontier as a lever to bring pressure to bear, whenever necessary, upon England in other matters. If the relations between the two countries grow strained beyond a certain point, you hear of troops from the Caucasus crossing the Caspian; if the situation gets worse, you learn the precise number of troops of all arms gathered at Kushkinski Post on the Afghan frontier; if a serious rupture occur, or were about to occur, I should expect the Russians to seize Herat, which they

could do without much difficulty. Then there would be peace, or war all round. I have no doubt Russia is ready enough to use the powerful leverage conferred by her position on the Afghan frontier, and she would be foolish, in her own interest, not to do so.† But the notion of invading India to annex and administer it does not seriously exist in Russia.

It would, from any point of view, including the merely technical one of men and transports, be far beyond Russia's means, considering the vast tasks she has undertaken and the vast aims she cherishes in other parts of the world. Finally, this must be considered. India no longer looms in Russia's eyes as the El Dorado of the world; she sees plainly the problems of finance and population that are assuming such grave dimensions there; she observes the almost mechanical recrudescence of famine; she realises what the strain of administering India is likely to be for England in years to come; she has not the least desire to add that burden to the many she already has to bear.

Therefore I hold that India offers no insurmountable or even serious obstacle to a solid and friendly understanding between England and Russia, covering all points where their national interests appear now to be at variance.

* On the other hand, a friend possessing unusual sources of military information assures me that the Afghans could delay the Russian seizure of Herat for a considerable time—for as long, he believes, as it would take an Indian force to reach there, if the Afghans desired us to assist them in that part. The late Amir, he adds, had a force in and near Herat of 22,000 men, with modern armament, especially in guns.

† When I returned from Central Asia during the South African War I was assured in official military circles in London that large bodies of Russian troops had been conveyed across the Caspian Sea or forwarded by railway to the frontier. In reply I informed them that I myself had been travelling up and down the line between the Caspian and Merv during those very weeks, talking freely with all sorts of people, and had not seen or heard of a single man being moved—except one shipload of recruits always sent at that time of year, very raw and very sea-sick. The *canard* does not nest in newspaper offices alone.

Readers of Colonel C. E. Yate's "Khurasan and Sistan" will remember that a high Russian officer (since stated by Major Yate to have been a Minister of State) said to him of the Merv-Kushk Railway, "We are building it to protect our interests in China and the Bosphorus."

There remains Persia, and here the question is one of much difficulty and perplexity, involving several issues of the greatest importance and range. Moreover, unlike those of China and India, it is one with which English readers are not yet familiar. It must therefore be considered in some detail.

Russia desires to become mistress of Persia, and to possess an outlet upon the Persian Gulf, and she is determined to use all her strength to carry out her desire. That is the postulate. She has nowhere, so far as I know, set forth in detail either the ground or the justification of this desire. I have already described some of her reasons at length—in fact, I believe I have stated her case, as regards one aspect of it, more fully than she has ever stated it herself. Her writers usually confine themselves to asseverating the fact, adducing no better arguments than "historic aim," "national necessity," or "inevitable expansion." When they descend to detail they are often on very unsafe ground. The latest of them merely remarks that "Russia . . . must be the predominant Power when her political security and vital interests are involved."* It is needless to point out that England could make out a better case upon these two grounds for her predominance in the Persian Gulf. The St. Petersburg *Bourse Gazette*, understood to express the views of M. de Witte himself, contained a typical Russian statement of claim two months ago, as follows :

The final decision rests neither with England nor Germany nor with Turkey, which reckons upon the support of the latter Power, but with Russia, whose merchant navy is now in regular communication with the ports of the Persian Gulf. It was not in order to secure for the British Fleet this important strategic point on the shore of the Persian Gulf that Russia has latterly devoted immense capital to the economic revival of Persia and that Russian diplomacy has done so much to emancipate Western Persia from British servitude. Inasmuch as Russia's diplomacy roused her neighbour Persia to a new existence and strengthened the moral and economic link between that country and Russia, it put an end once for all to the idle talk about dividing

* "A Russian Diplmoatist," *National Review*, January 1902, p. 687.

Persia into a northern sphere of influence belonging to Russia and a southern sphere of influence belonging to England. There can be no division of spheres of influence. Persia, together with the waters that bathe its shores, must remain the object of Russian material and moral protection.

This magniloquent allusion to the fiasco of the *Kornilof* and to "British servitude" is, it must be confessed, rather poor stuff, but it is the best we get. Therefore, as Russia does not state her case, we must state it for her.

Russia's desire for Persia, besides the possession of the future railway route to the East which I have previously described, is part of her general and vague, but perfectly established, movement toward the warm water. She feels suffocated, and is struggling for air—which in her case means sea outlets. She has secured one in the Far East free from ice ; she has created another in her own North ; she will beyond question force open the Dardanelles for her Black Sea fleet ; and to complete the circle—to open a window in every wall—she must have an egress into the seas of the Middle East—the Mediterranean of the future struggle. And, be it remembered, the strength of her desire is not less, but more, because it is of the nature of an instinctive impulse rather than a calculated plan. A man gasping for breath will smash things that he would not venture to touch deliberately. The desire seems to me natural and legitimate ; I feel convinced that every reader will admit that he would share it if he were a Russian. This much at least is certain : it will ride rough-shod over conventions and protocols and treaties. One thing, and one alone, will keep Russia permanently from the Persian Gulf : some force stronger than her own.

In pursuance of her aim she has already accomplished much. From Resht, on the Caspian, practically a Russian port, she has made a good road to Tehran, and is reaping a rich commercial reward ; she is pushing her railway fast from the Caucasus ; the only troops of the Shah worth considering are his

so-called "Cossacks," commanded by Russian officers; she is said to have a force at Turbat, to the distress of the natives; she secured a monopoly of railway-building in Persia for ten years; she has established a commercial agency and a Vice-Consul at Bushire; and she has recently coerced Persia into a new arrangement of *ad valorem* duties favourable to her own commerce. So far as North Persia is concerned, the *Times* admits that Russia "has established her commercial and industrial supremacy, not only by virtue of her geographical position, but also by bounties, financial encouragements, and a heavy expenditure of workmen's lives and hard cash." All these together, however, are of less significance than the step by which she laid hands upon Persian finance and the custom-houses—a step which shows that, although she has been quiescent over many things, she struck from the shoulder when a vital issue was raised by the action of another Power.

In 1892 the (British) Imperial Bank of Persia lent the Persian Government £500,000, upon the security of the customs receipts of Southern Persia and the Persian Gulf. In 1898 the Persian Government desired to borrow more from the same source. The same security was sufficient, the loan was for "productive consumption," the British Government approved and was a party to the negotiations, and £1,250,000 was underwritten in London. At the last moment Russia learned of the affair, and at once forbade the Persian Government, *sans phrases*, to conclude the loan, and offered a much larger sum on the security of all the customs. Persia was desperately alarmed, Lord Salisbury (exactly as later in the similar matter of a Chinese loan) did nothing to support the British capitalists whom he had encouraged, and the whole business was abandoned.*

* "From that time forward the influeuce of Russia in Persia has been in the ascendant, while that of Great Britain has perceptibly waned. *Hinc illæ lacrimæ.* Hence the troubles and obstacles encountered by Indian merchants on the new Quetta-Nushki route, and hence many other untoward consequences of a policy of drift and abstention. It is now clear that we stood at the parting of the ways when we

For a time Persia, afraid to offend either Russia or England, refrained from borrowing at all, and then Russian pressure carried the day. On January 30, 1900, the (Russian) *Banque des Prêts de Perse* took up a Persian five per cent. gold loan for 22,500,000 roubles (£2,375,000), upon the security of all the custom-houses except those in the province of Fars and on the Persian Gulf, redeemable in seventy-five years, with the added condition that all previous loans should be paid off at once, and no more incurred until this loan is discharged, without the permission of the Russian bank. Accordingly, on February 23, less than a month later, 5,000,000 roubles were remitted to London to pay off the British Loan of 1892. It was an audacious stroke, brilliantly successful. The remarks of the directors of the British bank and the underwriters are not recorded, but the *Rossia* recently alluded to the operation as "removing from the neck of Persia the strangling rope twisted about it by England."

The general result is that Persia is now financially a vassal of Russia. The particular results are that Persian duties are collected (except in Fars and upon the Persian Gulf), by Russians, or rather by Belgians acting for them (precisely as in the case of the Chinese railways), a fact which, according to Mr. Foley, the representative of the Indian Tea Association, "has given Indian traders the idea that the Russian Government is all-powerful here, that Persia is practically Russian, and British influence is *nil*"; and that, pleading the danger of the introduction of plague, Russia has established quarantine stations at Seistan and on the Herat border, and (again quoting Mr.

allowed Persia to do the bidding of Russia, and to decline to complete the almost completed arrangements she had made with a group of British capitalists for a British loan to meet her financial necessities. But we made our choice, and we must now take the consequences."—*The Times*, August 31, 1901.

The student cannot fail to be struck by the remarkable coincidence that in 1617, four years after his election, Michael Romanoff, the first Tsar, borrowed 7000 roubles from the Shah Abbas the Great of Persia, and that in 1900 Russia paid off the debt of Persia, preparatory to absorbing her.

Foley) is able to "paralyse any trade by the Quetta-Nushki route by keeping caravans and travellers unnecessarily long at any station before granting pratique." The Russian agents also, amongst other restrictions, forbid Indian merchants, carrying goods and money, to enter with arms, although the road in Persia is unsafe and every Persian is armed, and the Indian traders have offered to give any guarantee that no arms should be sold, and even to register every weapon and produce it again when they leave Persia. Thus a new and promising Indian trade outlet—which might be greatly developed by a railway from Quetta or Larkhana to Seistan—is in imminent danger of being blocked.

So much for the nature of Russia's claim upon Persia, and what she has already accomplished there. What now are England's position and title in the same sphere? In Northern Persia we have neither right nor result to point to, beyond certain financial and other relations which give us no kind of special interest, and our indirect concern with the trade of Afghanistan, our sphere of influence. In Southern Persia and the Gulf, on the other hand, our interest is both great and intimate. The present situation in the Gulf is the direct result of our work. British soldiers and sailors, and British treasure, acting continuously over a long period of years, have imposed peace and brought prosperity to what was—and speedily would be again, were authority removed—a hotbed of tribal warfare, slavery, piracy, and disorder of every kind. From this point of view the trade of the Persian Gulf is our asset—we have created it. Russia has nothing comparable of this kind to show. Moreover, although by her prohibitive tactics Russia has a large preponderance of the trade of Northern Persia, that of the Persian Gulf may be said to be almost wholly with the United Kingdom and India. Out of 188,608 tons of foreign shipping at the port of Busra in 1900, 172,938 were British.* Further, although the

* The "Statesman's Year Book" for 1901, pp. 610, 611, gives the total import and export trade of the United Kingdom and India with Persia as £3,619,006, and that

Banque des Prêts de Perse is (like the Russo-Chinese Bank) only another name for the Russian Government, and is establishing new branches and agencies, the Imperial Bank of Persia, a British institution, is "virtually the State bank of the country, the essential part of whose business is largely connected with the Government finances, such as the collection and transfer of Government revenues, the issue of paper money and the nickel coinage, the import of silver for the mint, &c." *

There exists, however, a ground for the *status quo* in Persia of far greater importance from the standpoint of international relations than any commercial achievements or prospects—nothing less, in fact, than an engagement between the Governments of Great Britain and Russia regarding the integrity and independence of Persia. This is the continuation of arrangements made and confirmed in 1834, 1838, 1839, and 1873, and our knowledge of it is conveyed in a despatch from Lord Salisbury to Sir Robert Morier, British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, dated March 12, 1888, in which he states that M. de Staal, Russian Ambassador in London, called at the Foreign Office that afternoon and read him a despatch "written in very friendly terms." Lord Salisbury continues :

In the first place, as regards our desire for an assurance that the engagement between the two Governments to respect and promote the integrity and independence of Persia is considered by the Russian Government as remaining in full force, M. de Giers states that, although, in their opinion, there are no present grounds for apprehending any danger to Persia, and although

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of Russia as £1,200,000. These figures can hardly be correct, and indeed it is probably impossible to get the correct figures from any source, as the Custom House does not furnish them, and in its returns "the countries only from which merchandise actually starts for Persia are given.—(Mr. Consul-General Wood.)" On the other hand, a Reuter telegram from Tehran gives the total foreign trade of Persia for the year ending March 21, 1901, as £8,000,000, and states that of this, fifty-six per cent. was trade with Russia, and twenty-four per cent. trade with Great Britain. But these are the figures of the Russo-Belgian customs staff, and by no means to be accepted without scrutiny.

* Mr. Consul-General C. G. Wood, "Report for the Year 1900 on the Trade of Azerbaïjan," p. 19.

they have received no communication on the subject from Tehran, yet the Russian Government have no objection to placing again on record that their views on this point are in no way altered. The Persian Government, his Excellency adds, have on more than one occasion had tangible proof of this, and he alludes to a military demonstration made at the request of the Shah in 1880 on the Caucasian frontier, when a portion of the Province of Azerbaïdjan was suffering from the incursions of bands of Kurds.

. . . . . .

I have expressed in M. de Staal, and I request your Excellency to offer M. de Giers, my best thanks for this frank and courteous communication of the views of the Russian Government. It has been highly satisfactory to her Majesty's Government to learn that those views are so much in accordance with their own, and they owe their acknowledgments to M. de Giers for enabling Sir H. D. Wolff to inaugurate his mission by an assurance to the Shah that the engagements between Great Britain and Russia to respect and promote the integrity and independence of the Persian Kingdom have again been renewed and confirmed.*

This important despatch shows, on the highest possible authority, that an engagement of long standing between the British and Russian Governments to respect the "integrity and independence" of Persia was declared by both to be binding upon them fourteen years ago. This engagement still holds good, for in reply to an inquiry by myself, in a speech in the House of Commons on January 22, 1902, Lord Cranborne, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, made this important statement:

The hon. member for Wolverhampton referred to an exchange of notes which took place in 1888 in regard to Persia, and he quite accurately quoted what passed on that occasion. It was that mutual assurances had been given that the policy of England and Russia was the maintenance of the integrity of Persia; and I have special reason to believe that on both sides that assurance is maintained.

* "Treaties containing Guarantees or Engagements by Great Britain in Relation to the Territory or Government of other Countries." Miscellaneous Series, No. 2 (1898), p. 130.

The whole question of the future of Persia, however, is one of undoubted urgency. There is in existence an arrangement between Russia and the Sultan regarding future railways in Asiatic Turkey; there is some ground for the belief that Russia has secretly acquired from Persia a lease of one of the ports on the Gulf; Germany has the concession of a railway from Constantinople to Baghdad, and her agents have already once applied in the name of the Sultan for a harbour on the Gulf;* British gunboats have forcibly prevented the cession of a coaling station to France on the Gulf, and the landing of Turkish troops at another port there; the Indian Government is being strongly urged to construct a railway to the Persian frontier; the Russian and Continental Press sees an imminent contest between Great Britain and Russia over the whole issue; and the subject of the fate of Persia in the future relations of the two nations has been raised in an acute form by several English writers. In its frankest form this urgent question is, should England consent to the annexation of Persia by Russia in order to effect an Anglo-Russian settlement of all matters of possible conflict between the two nations, and to replace the present relations of suspicion and veiled hostility, with the possibility of a ruinous conflict, by an amicable and inclusive understanding?

The question is of the greatest importance and delicacy. Those who answer it in the affirmative begin by laying stress upon the relief every British statesman, and, indeed, every thoughtful citizen, would feel if all chance of a war with Russia were removed—the possibility of which dogs our foreign policy at every step. Upon this we are all agreed. They then proceed to offer us a choice between fighting a Continental coalition, to be created by Germany, and coming to an arrangement with Russia. And some press this point with the peculiar confidence which attaches to anonymity. "Unless by conscription, a fleet at the three-Power standard, and service estimates rising

* See page 258.

at no distant date to eighty or ninety millions a year, there can be no adequate insurance against the appearance of Germany and her fleet at the head of a hostile Europe but a settlement with Russia by the unreserved relinquishment of Persia to her influence. There is no diplomatic alternative worth consideration." * This course has also been strongly urged by a group of anonymous writers in the *National Review*, but their plan is not so bold, for it consists in offering Russia a commercial outlet on the Persian Gulf, "in return for an undertaking on the part of Russia to respect the political *status quo* along the shores of the Gulf." This is a case of Mr. Balfour and Port Arthur over again, and would be followed, in my opinion, by a similar result; namely, that we should give away everything and provoke ill-will to boot. Sir Rowland Blennerhassett, who writes upon foreign affairs with much knowledge and sobriety of judgment, has also strongly advocated a complete abandonment of our interests in Persia, as the only way to avoid a "desperate war," and further "deplorable results" from surrenders to Germany of the kind we have recently experienced in the Far East.

It cannot be denied that there is much force in the contention that England could hardly fight Russia in Persia without military sacrifices to which the nation would be most loath to submit on such an issue. This is a question for military experts, of course, but the difficulty of the situation that would arise if Russia simultaneously seized Herat and advanced an army to Tehran (where it would meet with no local opposition whatever), may surely be appreciated by any thoughtful Englishman. Moreover, we should almost certainly not be offered the decision of any such clear-cut problem as this. Russia would assuredly follow her usual tactics of advancing step by step, no one step being sufficiently hostile in appearance to furnish a direct challenge to a war in which the fate of the British Empire would be at stake, but all of them forming at last the *fait*

* "Calchas," in the *Fortnightly Review*, December 1901, p. 947.

accompli envisaged from the first. The recent history of Central Asia affords a precise precedent.

On the other hand, there is weighty authority against the abandonment of our position on the Persian Gulf. Captain Mahan, for example, has made the following observations upon this question :

> Progress through Persia would not only approach the Gulf, but if successful would turn—would outflank—the mountains of Afghanistan, avoiding the difficulties presented by the severe features of that country, and by the character of its inhabitants. Russia would thus obtain a better position both in itself and in its communication with the north, for beginning and sustaining operations in India itself..
>
> Unless Great Britain and Germany are prepared to have the Suez route to India and the Far East closed to them in time of war, they cannot afford to see the borders of the Levant and the Persian Gulf become the territorial base for the navy of a possible enemy, especially if it appear that the policy of the latter in the Pacific runs seriously counter to their own.*

And Lord Curzon committed himself some time ago to a most uncompromising attitude. After describing the results of British surrender of the control of the Persian Gulf, he says: "I do not think there can be two opinions among Englishmen that there is no justification, either in policy or in reason, for exposing India to such a danger, or for allowing South Persia to fall into Russian hands."† And in another place he has declared that he would regard the cession to Russia of a Persian Gulf port as "a wanton rupture of the *status quo*, and as an international provocation to war, and I should impeach the British Minister who was guilty of acquiescing in such a surrender as a traitor to his country." ‡

And Major Francis Edward Younghusband has put the objection in a concrete form :

* "The Problem of Asia," pp. 56, 77.
† "Russia in Central Asia," second edition, p. 378.
‡ "Persia" (1892), vol. II, p. 465.

Some will say there is room enough in Asia for both England and Russia, and why not let Russia go to the Persian Gulf if she wants to? There is room, of course, but Russia already has much the larger share of it. While we have less than 2,000,000 she has 6,500,000 square miles. Besides this she is just absorbing Manchuria with another 360,000 square miles, and we admit that she must have Mongolia with 1,300,000 square miles and Chinese Turkestan with 580,000 square miles. In addition to all this, which amounts in the aggregate to 2,250,000 square miles, we recognise that she must control Northern Persia. Is not this enough room without conceding Southern Persia as well?*

These are all opinions entitled to respectful consideration; but, upon examination, it will appear that the authorities professing them contradict themselves or one another. Captain Mahan, for instance, says in one place that Russia established in the Persian Gulf would be a "perpetual menace in war," and that England "cannot afford to see the Persian Gulf become the territorial base for the navy of a possible enemy"; yet in another he declares that the maintenance there, by Russia, of "a navy sufficient to be a serious consideration to the fleets of Great Britain, and to those who would be her natural allies upon the sea in case of complications in the Farther East, would involve an exhausting effort, and a naval abandonment of the Black Sea, or of the China Sea, or of both." † It may fairly be argued that we do not run much risk in affording to a possible enemy an opportunity of which he cannot make use without exhausting himself. Lord Curzon, again, says that "The absorption of N. E. Persia and Khorasan will provide an alternative route of advance, either upon Herat or, through Seistan, upon Beluchistan and India itself." ‡ Yet, according to Major Younghusband, in the letter previously cited, "we recognise that Russia must control Northern Persia," and therefore what Lord Curzon fears for Herat has already happened! And surely the invasion of India through Seistan is a contingency remote enough to be disregarded. It appears to me, therefore, that the

* Letter to *The Times*, December 5, 1901.

† "The Problem of Asia," p. 119.

‡ "Russia in Central Asia," second edition, p. 377.

opinions even of these authorities do not bring the solution much nearer.

Moreover, there can be no great and far-reaching arrangement between two Powers in which some risks are not incurred. The question must be whether the advantages greatly outweigh the dangers. A Russian naval base and fleet in the Persian Gulf would necessitate a strengthening of our sea power in Indian waters, for the safeguarding alike of India and our routes to the Far East and to Australasia, and the building of certain strategical Indian railways, *e.g.* from Ahmedabad to Karachi. But friendly relations with Russia (including, as they necessarily would, a similar settlement with France), placed upon a permanent and defined footing, would be cheaply purchased at the price of an additional squadron in those waters, and a railway or two. And would it not be rather an advantage than otherwise to us, who must for our very existence retain the command of the sea, that Russia should come down to the sea and thereby offer a fresh vulnerable place and a new trade-route to our natural means of attack, if ever friendship failed? The more the elephant comes to the water, the better the chance of the whale. And, to recur to the kernel of the question, can we, a sea Power, prevent Russia, with her vast army, carrying out these land operations in far-off Asia whenever she may choose to do so?

This question can no longer be regarded as one between England and Russia alone. Upon its decision hang two other international issues of great gravity. If we come to terms with Russia, our relations with France, already happily upon a better footing, must also necessarily improve. To us this would be easy and natural, but France would follow Russia's lead in such a matter, where she would hesitate, from old suspicion and recent sharp divergence of interest, to take action by herself. Frenchmen, usually so alert to perceive national movements of sympathy or the reverse, would then probably at last learn that there is no country except the United States for which so much good-

will is felt in England, or against whom national passion could only with so much difficulty be aroused, as France. And to nine Englishmen out of ten the fact that a Russian understanding would necessarily involve a settlement with France also, would be an additional and strong argument in its favour.

The other international issue is unhappily of a different character. The feeling of the British people toward Germany has undergone a serious change of late, and although it would be impolitic to exaggerate this, it would be even more unwise to ignore it. Several causes have brought about the change. The masses of the people, acting upon simple impressions and instinctive impulses, have been deeply affronted by the indecent caricatures of King and Queen which have enjoyed absolute immunity in a land where *lèse-majesté* is officially regarded as a peculiarly heinous offence, and by the veritable campaign of invective and "foul and filthy lies," as Sir Edward Grey has rightly called them, directed against our officers and men in South Africa.* At first this was confined to that considerable portion of the German press known to be corrupt, and it was fed by the ample means of which the Boer representatives in Brussels at first disposed. But later it spread to more respectable German journals, until virtually the whole press reeked with it—the Socialist *Vorwärts* being the chief honourable exception in this as in so many other matters—the insertion of indecent advertisements, for example. It is easy to analyse the origins of this seemingly volcanic upheaval. Bismarck systematically corrupted the press, and poisoned the atmosphere of Germany with suspicion and hatred of England. There are his chickens coming home to roost. The extraordinary growth of national sentiment after the war of 1870, legitimate and natural

* Lord Roberts, Commander-in-Chief, has even thought it necessary to give his "most positive assurance" to a German lady correspondent that the statements that Boer women and girls have been violated by British officers and soldiers, and that all Boer females over twelve years of age in a certain refugee camp were "despatched to Pretoria for immoral purposes" were "absolutely without foundation"!

enough, has now run to excess in that fatal pride which was the favourite theme of the Greek dramatist. The unparalleled development of German commerce and the sudden accretion of wealth has been accompanied by a distinct lowering of the old German standards of mental sobriety and severe morality, with the result that serious Germans have not hesitated to write in alarm of certain recent events and tendencies both at home and in the colonies. This analysis, however, though it may explain the origin of the anti-British campaign, cannot mitigate its intense effect upon the minds of innumerable Englishmen, who have seen their country befouled by a dirty torrent which even the example and speech of the Emperor himself were powerless to stem.

The anger in the minds of the British people at large is matched, unfortunately, by the alarm with which thoughtful observers have noticed certain revelations of modern German policy. The repeated declarations of the Emperor concerning the part to be played in the immediate future by the German navy, his dictum that "Our future lies upon the water," the official definition that the navy must be able to "keep the North Sea clear," its rapid growth, officially insisted upon in the face of every pecuniary and Parliamentary obstacle, and a recent revelation that it is being pushed forward even faster than the German public was aware—have naturally raised acutely the question, What *rôle*, against whom, is the German navy intended to play? And the geographical situation of Germany, her rapidly increasing population, and her over-production, demanding new and protected markets, together with the fact that only two countries, England and Holland, possess over-sea territories corresponding to the German demand, supply the answer. Holland is surely destined to come under German influence, and if the German fleet to be is not intended—alone or by judicious alliance—to neutralise England's command of the sea, with its natural commercial consequences

which Germany feels restricting her ambition and needs at so many points, and to secure for her a position on the water analogous to that she enjoys on land, then a foreigner can hardly see what reason it has for coming into existence at all. At any rate, whether this be the aim or not, the growth of the German navy is calculated to make it a possibility.

The alarm of students of foreign affairs rests also on more precise grounds than the above. The German Foreign Minister has informed the world that Germany sounded other Powers of Europe concerning a possible coalition against England in connection with South African affairs, and that, having discovered that she would be "isolated" in acting against us, to be "patriotic" could do nothing. A recent writer has expressed "doubt whether history records a more impudent avowal of an unfriendly act," and if for the word "impudent," which has no applicability, the word "frank" were substituted, the remark is not exaggerated. Again, the unconcealed and almost contemptuous hostility to England showed by Count von Waldersee in China, against which both Lord Salisbury and Lord Lansdowne protested in sharp terms,* and which we should presumably have met in a peremptory manner if almost every available British soldier had not been in South Africa, could not but produce a lamentable impression in this country. Finally, the manner in which the German Government has treated Lord Salisbury's Anglo-German Convention regarding China (now

* For instance, Lord Salisbury to the British Ambassador in Berlin, October 30, 1900: "The arrangements referred to with regard to railway traffic assume to deal with private British commercial interests without consultation with the persons affected or communication with her Majesty's Government. You should request the German Government to obtain from Count Waldersee an explanation of these arrangements." And Lord Lansdowne to the same, November 27: "In the opinion of her Majesty's Government, such an arrangement, closely affecting the interests of the British bondholders, should not have been made without consultation with their representatives or previous communication with her Majesty's Government. I should wish your Excellency to point this out to the German Government."

A summary of German anti-British action in China was given in a striking letter to *The Times*, signed "Far East," on August 26, 1901.

known in Germany as the "Yang-tsze Agreement"!) has changed many doubts of its policy into conviction. This mad agreement formally gave Germany henceforth an equal right in our own Chinese sphere of influence, and only imposed upon her in return obligations of so flimsy a character that she has already tossed them aside.

The simple truth, as it has long been known to the few and is now at last beginning to be appreciated by the many, is that Germany has come to regard us with hostility, tempered by indifference, if not by contempt, and that she will do almost anything, or leave almost anything undone, to keep on good terms with Russia. She is running counter to Russia, as I have previously shown, on one great matter of foreign policy, but with this exception the German attitude toward Russia is only equalled in submission by the attitude of the British Government for the past seven years toward Germany. There is nothing in this for Englishmen to blame or to resent: every independent nation has the right to make its policy subserve its own ends; but there is very much in it from which they should take warning, if not alarm, and the German people cannot be surprised that Englishmen who read the venerable Professor Mommsen's "regret . . . that a deep and incurable split" is "now yawning between the two nations," should themselves reluctantly recognise that the former good relations with their neighbours across the North Sea have, for the present at any rate, given place on both sides to a very different feeling.

To return now, after this excursus, to the relations of England and Russia, it is evident that if there is any ground whatever to fear the active hostility of Germany in the near future, with possibly other attempts to form coalitions against us, the fact must exercise a very grave influence upon our minds in considering our future relations with other Powers. If we do Germany an injustice in being thus influenced, if our suspicions and alarms are unfounded—and there is still enough good-will left

in this country for Germany, admiration for the great qualities of the Teutonic people, and sympathetic respect for their great ruler to create the earnest hope that it may be so—the fault is her own. We have been long enough in learning to distrust her, and it is only as a measure of self-defence that we now regard her attitude as an additional reason for endeavouring to adjust our national interests to those of Russia and France.

The reader will probably have concluded by now that I also am an advocate of the policy of securing Russian good-will by the relinquishment of Persia to her influence. That is not quite the case. I am most earnestly in favour of a *rapprochement* with Russia, and after long consideration I do not share the view that a Russian port on the Persian Gulf would necessarily involve a serious danger to the British Empire. Certainly it is illogical to admit one rival Power—to Koweit—and at the same time see disaster in the approach of another. But there are other aspects of the proposal in which I see grave objections. To begin with, this is not a matter which we should approach like a bull at a gate. It is not the kind of masterpiece that can be *fondu d'un trait*. I think I know enough of Russia to say that to approach her with a complete cut-and-dried offer, springing from no succession of events or arising from no diplomatic dead-lock, would be to invite certain rebuff. She would fear us bearing gifts. She would conclude that our new-found friendship had its root in weakness, not in conviction. She would observe that not until we had fought an unsuccessful war for more than two years, spent two hundred millions of money, seen Consols down to 92, lost twenty thousand men, and wondered how we were going to replace our present army when it is disbanded, did it occur to us to remember that we loved Russia so much that we would gladly make a heavy sacrifice for her good-will. This is what she—and others—would retort,

and it may as well be set down bluntly. We are far too apt to throw dust in our own eyes in dealing with other nations. To say to her, "Please take Persia and be friends," for that is what the offer amounts to when stripped of its diplomatic foliage, would cause her to draw two instant conclusions: first, that we were in a far weaker and more dangerous position than she had thought; and second, that we had made up our minds that we could not possibly preserve our interests in Persia against her influence. And neither of these conclusions would be likely to move her to a generous or a grateful response.

Nor could Russia be wholly blamed for such an attitude. We suffer here from the multitudinous errors of our past policy toward her—now hot, now cold; now abjectly yielding, now suddenly voting millions for war in a few minutes; now deploying our fleet against her when exhausted at the moment of victory, now casually admitting that we had "put our money on the wrong horse"; now inviting her to a port in the China Sea, now reproaching her for fortifying it; now graciously remarking that there is "room enough in Asia" for us both, now thinking we had cleverly got Germany to help us to stop her there. And as a result of long experience of our diplomacy Russia will take a great deal of convincing that we should stick to any line of policy, or that we should offer more than a forensic opposition to anything she might do.

Devoutly to be wished as is a cordial settlement with Russia of our respective world-interests, and, though there is every opportunity for it and no insuperable obstacle to prevent, it is unlikely to be reached except in one way. To deal with Russia on equal terms we must begin by regaining her respect. I do not mean her respect for our moral qualities or our disinterested aims; she will probably persist in thinking us very much like other people in those matters; but her respect for our sagacity, our tenacity, and our strength. And we shall only accomplish this by holding our own wherever we come into contact with

her—by never letting our words run ahead of our intentions, by never forgetting that deeds are more eloquent than despatches, by never taking hold of anything she desires that we can well do without, and by never letting go when we have once taken hold.

In saying this I am prepared for the retort that amicable relations are impossible with a nation whose agents on every outpost or contested field act without much scruple on their own initiative, while the central authority is usually ready to profit by their indiscretions, even while ostensibly repudiating them. It would be easy to give a score examples of this—in fact, it is a kind of unwritten understanding in Russian diplomacy that a distant agent may do pretty much what he will at his own risk. If it succeeds, he is handsomely rewarded; if it fails he is ruthlessly dismissed. It is true, too, that the Russian diplomatist does not act up to the level of Bismarck's profession, *Offiziell wird nicht gelogen :* the late Count Muravief will always be remembered in diplomacy for one startling performance of this nature.* But my reply is, first, that our own vacillation and malleability have encouraged Russia to take liberties with us; she does not play these tricks upon Germany or Japan. And second, we had better learn that the obligation to speak the truth to your own disadvantage is not considered abroad to hold good in diplomatic intercourse. There is no question here of "lying"; the "lie" only arises when there is a recognised obligation, as among honourable people in ordinary life, to speak the truth. It is not a "lie" deliberately to give your opponent by your play a false idea of your hand in a game of cards; Russian diplomatists—and most others—regard their work also as a game—with subtler rules, for higher stakes. When they score against us by taking advantage of what they consider one of the legitimate openings, and arousing in us a childlike belief in the

* See "Correspondence respecting the Affairs of China" (China No. 1, 1898), *passim*.

thing which is not, their satisfaction and their astonishment are equal. Of course the diplomatic falsehood must be used rarely and with discretion, and the diplomatist, not a fool, who is known never to use it under any circumstances enjoys a peculiar prestige and authority. The late Foreign Minister of a certain Great Power was known in diplomatic circles as "the biggest liar in Europe"; his successor, on the other hand, owes much of his remarkable success to the fact that he always speaks the truth. I was once talking to a great foreign statesman upon a matter at issue between another country and my own, and in answer to a remark he made I pointed out that the Foreign Minister of that other country had just publicly declared the contrary to be the case. "And you believe him?" was the simple reply. The British Ambassador to a Great Power once said to me, "I shall believe that —— is capable of deceiving me when I find that he has done so, and not before." This is the Public-School spirit in diplomacy—the finest spirit in the world in its place, but if I had been Foreign Secretary I should have retired that Ambassador forthwith. It would have been better for us, I may add, if he had been retired. I once asked a Foreign Minister for information upon a certain point. "Why do you ask me?" he said; "why don't you ask your Ambassador?" I looked at him for a moment, and then he smiled, and we talked of something else. His smile meant that he knew, and knew that I knew, that the Ambassador in question would believe anything he was told, and was therefore the last person to apply to for information—a habit which was the despair of his subordinates, who grew haggard coding despatches which they knew conveyed erroneous impressions. But these reminiscences are carrying me from the matter in hand, which is that we shall regain the respect of Russia in diplomacy by treating her with honourable frankness, and at the same time making it perfectly clear to her that we are not to be deceived by any fair words and that any arrangement with her must be set down definitely in

the bond. When Russian statesmen realise that a new spirit—the spirit of efficiency—has come into the conduct of British affairs—that we are genuinely friendly at heart, whether we are on the top of the wave or in the trough, but that when we are hit we are absolutely certain to hit back, even if some day we have to prohibit their goods in our markets to prevent the further prohibition of our goods in theirs, they will be as ready for an *entente* as we are, and then some "casual meeting at an inn" will do the rest.

Now, to have done with this matter of Persia, upon which so much hangs, when the *entente* comes, what form is it to take? In fairness this question should only be put to a statesman who has "seen the correspondence," not to a humble unofficial student; but I have my own notion of an answer, and it is based upon the belief that the diplomatic struggles and even the wars of the future will not be for territory, but against commercial discrimination. I see no good reason in British interests why Russia should not develop Persia as a market for her surplus manufactures, why she should not bring her goods and passengers to the sea through Persia, why she should not have a naval base in the Persian Gulf. But I see excellent reasons why she should not come down to the Persian Gulf and immediately extinguish British and Indian trade there, as she has virtually done in Central Asia, by the imposition of absolutely prohibitive duties. If she would bind herself, by formal treaty, to admit all foreign goods to Persia and transport them upon Persian railways on precisely the same terms as Russian goods, she might, in my opinion, have Persia to-morrow, with all the vast advantage its possession would confer upon her.*

* The following passage in the article entitled "Russia and England," by "A Russian Diplomatist," is also worth quoting both as an example of the use of asseveration, instead of solid argument, in the Russian demand for Persia, and also because in the last sentence the writer apparently foresees, and *more suo*, hastens to concede at this preliminary stage, the suggestion I make here:

"The geographical position of Russia and of Persia have bound the essential interests of those two countries together for more than a century, and it appears to us

Such a treaty, however, would have to be formally recognised by other nations besides ourselves, so that any infraction of it would involve something more than a bi-lateral struggle. And first of all I should look to the United States to be a party to such a compact. This is, I know, not the common view of what the American Government may be expected to do, but I believe the future will see American policy modified in this matter, as it has been so strikingly modified of late in others. Captain Mahan has been quoted on the other side in this Persian question, and I may draw from his remarkable insight two striking passages in support of my own contention :

> Americans must accept and familiarise their minds to the fact that, with their irrevocable entry into the world's polity, first, by the assertion of the Monroe doctrine, and since by their insular acquisitions—above all, the Philippines—and by the interests at stake in China, they cannot divest themselves of concern, practical as well as speculative, in such a question as the balance of power in the Levant, or at the entrance of the Persian Gulf.
>
> As contrasted with the political unity of Russia and her geographical continuity, the influences that can possibly be opposed to her are diverse and scattered. They find, however, a certain unifying motive in a common interest, of unfettered commerce and of transit in the regions in question. *It is upon the realisation of this interest, and upon the accurate appreciation of their power to protect it—and not upon artificial combinations*—that correct policy or successful concert in the future must rest.*

Nothing could be truer or more lucidly stated than the sentence I have italicised. Indeed, it seems to need only to be

impossible that Russia should yield any of her acquired advantages to any other Power. We therefore cannot see any serious possibility of England's preventing Russia from approaching toward the Persian Gulf. It is possible that this goal will not be reached to-morrow, but it certainly will be in the near future. In any event a partition of influence in Persia between Russia and England appears to be outside the range of practical politics. However, no impediments would be imposed upon the development of British commerce as protected by international rights and demanded by the needs of the Persian people."

The obvious comment upon the last sentence is that if no impediments were placed upon British trade in a Russian Persia, it would be the one exception to a hitherto invariable rule.

* "The Problem of Asia," pp. 57 and 68.

understood to be accepted. For the United States, hardly less than for England, open markets for manufactures are an essential condition of future welfare, and it is irrational in this age, when steam and electricity have annihilated distance, that this interest should be insisted upon in one part of the world and set aside as contrary to tradition and policy in another. If the Open Door in China justifies an American Secretary of State in sending a strong despatch to all the European Governments and to Japan, why does not the Open Door in Persia? In logic, therefore, as well as in the pursuit of legitimate and imperative national interest, I fail to see why the United States should decline to be a party to a multi-lateral agreement giving great geographical and transit advantages in Persia to the Power which most desires and needs them, in return for an equality of trade for all the world there. Similar considerations should bring about the adhesion of France, Italy, and Japan. I omit Germany, because she is apparently already engaged in an attempt to extend her own high tariff to that part of the world, but France has not received from Russia such treatment in the matter of tariff as to cause her to welcome the extension of Russian duties to another great part of the world, and the fact that she has concluded a military alliance for mutual defence with Russia is no reason why she should not do all in her power to extend the market for her own people's manufactures and products.

This suggestion opens up a wide field for discussion, and it would be foreign to my general subject to review the arguments for and against it. I hope to return to it elsewhere, so here I will only point out that if once adopted anywhere this policy of international commercial equality in regard to the future disposal of undeveloped countries would acquire an almost irresistible moral momentum, and would go far toward removing from mankind the shadow of several imminent wars.

Finally, let us consider for a moment what is the British alternative policy toward Persia, and on this point a recent debate in Parliament enables us to speak with confidence. In two debates in the House of Commons Lord Cranborne has spoken for the British Government upon the Persian question. I take these passages from his speeches :

Our position in the Persian Gulf, both commercially and politically, was one of a very special character, and his Majesty's Government had always considered that the ascendency of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf was the foundation of British policy. This was not merely a question of theory; it was a statement of fact. Our trade interests there far exceeded those of any other country. Our recognised maritime supremacy secured our political ascendency. The policy of the Government with regard to Koweit was to maintain the *status quo*, and this they had put forward with some insistence.

You may roughly lay down that our object in Asia is to maintain the *status quo*. I do not mean to say that that is a statement to which there may not be some exceptions, but, taking it generally, the policy of England throughout Asia is to maintain the *status quo*. That is an advantageous policy. It was not always our policy, because at other times a different policy was more suitable; but at the present moment, with the very great extension which our Empire has had of late years, undoubtedly the policy of maintaining the *status quo* is the right one for this country. This is a policy which may be mistaken for what was called by one of the honourable members who have spoken, a policy of drift. It does not follow that it is a policy of drift. It is a difficult policy to maintain, because as other countries advance a purely defensive policy must always present much greater obstacles than any other. What is true of the East generally is true of Persia. We have very large interests there. Far be it from me to minimise them in the least. They are interests of the highest political order, vast commercial interests which it is our wish and our duty to maintain. We see no reason why that should lead us into anything but friendly relations with Russia; but although we seek friendly relations, I must remind the House that those friendly relations are not to be sought at the cost of any treaty rights we possess. Whether to Russia or to any other country, it does not become us to go cap in hand for an understanding. Our policy is the integrity of Persia. That unselfishness is not due to any elaborate moral motive, because it is our interest that Persia should remain in its present territorial condition. But, when I state that, I ought to add that there are limits to that policy. That policy cannot be pursued independently of the action of other Powers. We are anxious for the

integrity of Persia, but we are anxious far more for the balance of power; and it would be impossible for us, whatever the cause, to abandon what we look upon as our rightful position in Persia. Especially is that true in regard to the Persian Gulf, as I had the honour to state to the House a few days ago. It is true not only of the Persian Gulf, but of the Southern Provinces of Persia, and those provinces which border on our Indian Empire. Our rights there, and our position of ascendency, we cannot abandon. In the Gulf itself, as I ventured to state on the previous occasion, our ascendency is not merely a question of theory, but a question of fact. Our position of ascendency is assured by the existence of our maritime supremacy.

More information is often secured in the House of Commons by carefully worded questions to Ministers than from their speeches, and the above exposition of policy is usefully supplemented by two answers which Lord Cranborne made about the same time. Here is one :

The occupation of a port in the Persian Gulf by any Power would be inconsistent with the maintenance of the *status quo* which, as I have already informed the House, is the policy of his Majesty's Government.

And in reply to an inquiry whether any exchange of views had taken place between his Majesty's Government and the German Government as to the selection of a terminus on the Persian Gulf, Lord Cranborne said :

His Majesty's Government have intimated to that of Germany that they are in no way opposed to the scheme, in which it is probable that British capitalists will wish to take a considerable share. There has already been some discussion of the point referred to in the second part of the question between the two Governments; and no decision with regard to it will be come to without a further exchange of views.*

The situation is therefore this : England's policy is the *status quo* in Persia and the Persian Gulf; but this means the political and not the commercial *status quo;* and the latter is

* These quotations are taken from *The Times* Parliamentary reports of Jan. 17, 23, 24, and 25, 1902.

compatible with a German railway to the Gulf and a German terminus there, which is actually under discussion at this moment between England and Germany.

Such a policy is self-condemned. To suppose that Germany will rest content with a merely commercial outlet, and that she will not subsequently find insuperable reasons for fortifying it and making it a basis for her ships of war is, in my opinion, childish. The result will be the fiasco and the friction of Port Arthur over again. The British Government, in fact, is simply maintaining its old policy of paper protests against Russia, while yielding once more to German pressure. And I may perhaps quote my own comment upon Lord Cranborne's statement in the debate already mentioned :

> I hold that there should be a definite statement of the policy of his Majesty's Government in Persia—not merely the policy of saying "Hands off" to Germany and "Hands off" to Russia, and still doing nothing, while both countries steadily advanced until British interests found themselves between them like a nut in a nut-cracker. In conclusion, I am strongly of opinion that, if the British policy is simply to keep out Russia, more particularly by means of any understanding, secret or otherwise, which would let Germany into the Persian Gulf, then we are preparing for ourselves in the future not only grievous commercial injury but possibly also imperial disaster.*

Our policy, in a word, is simply that deprecated so neatly by Sir Edward Grey (Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the last Liberal Government) in this debate—"a policy which combines in a most extraordinary way the disadvantages both of yielding and of resistance, without getting the advantages of either course." Lord Cranborne says that we must not go "cap in hand" to Russia. Precisely; but my own contention

* This speech was, of course, made before Lord Cranborne had admitted that England had practically consented to a German outlet upon the Persian Gulf. I may add that the fear I expressed on page 402, *footnote*, regarding the existence of a secret treaty between Great Britain and Germany, appears to have been officially admitted.

is that we shall only arrive at good relations with her by going boldly cap on head—in Mr. Meredith's delightful phrase,

> With hindward feather and with forward toe.

In considering this most grave question of the relations of Russia and England, we must never hide from ourselves the fact that it is no easy matter for two nations so dissimilar in conditions, opinions, institutions, and ideals, to arrive at harmony of purpose. Russia is an autocracy: so long as a strong and consistent autocrat rules, absolute continuity of aim is probable. In Great Britain, though persistence of view is to be expected, representative institutions, reflecting a gust of national passion or modification of national conviction, may quickly register a change of policy. The accession of a new autocrat, on the other hand, may substitute a feeble will and a fickle attitude for strength and consistency. At any rate, a foreign nation may naturally hesitate before staking some of its most vital interests upon the will, or perhaps only the life, of one man. I have cited the opinions of leading Russian statesmen, but for my own part I can see no sure foundation for Anglo-Russian good-will except a sincere conviction upon each side that such would be for its own good and the advantage of mankind. I shall be ridiculed by some for attributing any weight to the latter consideration in the case of Russia, but closer observers will probably support me in the view that the Russians, not less than ourselves, are a nation of sentimentalists, and even more sensitive than ourselves to broad philosophical appeals. Between us and them there is not, in my opinion, any innate, permanent instinct of hostility. The present popular hostility had its roots in the Crimean War (a painful memory to every Englishman who has studied its diplomatic origin) and has developed of late from causes easy to analyse if space permitted. Russia has one deep-rooted and ever-present national antipathy, probably destined to exhibit itself some day in flam-

ing colours to the world, but it is not toward England. She has sharp suspicions, and indeed anxieties, regarding the aims of another nation, but this is not ourselves. If a conflict with us were as likely as her newspapers profess to believe, her newspapers would never be permitted to chronicle their belief in excited language day by day. They fling their sparks into what is non-explosive; if it were gunpowder, their pyrotechnics would speedily be damped down. Indeed, the hand of authority has turned the hose on this fiery press once or twice when there has been real danger of a conflagration.

At the present moment the conditions are perhaps not favourable for a reconciliation and settlement. We should gravely err, however, in my opinion, in regarding ourselves as more "isolated" than others, whether our isolation be "splendid" or the reverse. The prestige of our Government—of a group of individuals—has suffered—not the prestige of the British people.* I would go so far as to say that respect, not to say fear, enters more often into the feeling of foreign statesmen towards us to-day than at any previous period of our modern history. The spectre of isolation makes more wakeful couches than ours. If the roofs could be lifted off the Foreign Offices of Europe and a glance cast into their recesses, I fancy that the uneasiness prevailing in unsuspected places would go far toward reassuring Britons concerning their own position in the world. Therefore, we may await with comparative equanimity the development of a *rapprochement* based upon geography and upon history, upon sentiment and upon interest. I believe it will come in time—if not to-day, then to-morrow. When it comes it will show how little exaggeration there was in the words of

* "With these obvious gains—development of Imperial purpose, strengthening of Imperial ties, broadening and confirming the bases of sea-power, increase of military efficiency, demonstrated capacity to send and to sustain 200,000 men on active service, for two years, 6000 miles from home—I do not believe the international prestige of Great Britain has sunk in foreign Cabinets, however it may be reckoned in the streets and cafés of foreign cities."—CAPTAIN A. T. MAHAN, in the *National Review*, December 1901, p. 511.

the Tsar Nicholas I. to Sir Hamilton Seymour before the terrible blunder of the Crimea, "Let England and Russia arrive at an understanding: the rest is nothing." And with its inevitable consequences it will do more than any other conceivable event in Europe to bring about a realisation of the ideal of the Tsar Nicholas II., and to connect an imperishable glory with his name a new secular era from which to reckon human progress —A.O.P., *Ab orbe pacificato*, "From the Pacification of the World."

POSTSCRIPT.—On the day that the foregoing chapter is passed for press, the British Government has issued a most momentous Agreement between Great Britain and Japan, signed in London on January 30, 1902, relating to the maintenance of the *status quo* in China and Corea. After declaring that the two Powers are "entirely uninfluenced by any aggressive tendencies in either country," and defining their common interests to be "the independence and territorial integrity of the Empire of China and the Empire of Corea, and in securing equal opportunities in those countries for the commerce and industry of all nations," the Agreement proceeds as follows:

Article II.—If either Great Britain or Japan, in defence of their respective interests as above described, should become involved in war with another Power, the other High Contracting Party will maintain a strict neutrality, and use its efforts to prevent other Powers from joining in hostilities against its ally.

Article III.—If in the above event any other Power or Powers should join in hostilities against that ally, the other High Contracting Party will come to his assistance and will conduct the war in common, and make peace in mutual agreement with it.

Article IV.—The High Contracting Parties agree that neither of them will, without consulting the other, enter into separate arrangements with another Power to the prejudice of the interests above described.

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER XXVI

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

AFTER four journeys made under the most favourable conditions for seeing and hearing, after thirty thousand miles of travel in Russia—heat and cold, river and mountain, wheat-field and cotton-field, desert and steppe, empty country and crowded capital—what is the upshot of it all, what are the dominant superficial impressions left upon one's mind ?

Vastness of area, of course, to begin with. The extent of the Russian Empire is almost terrifying. The British Empire is enormous, too, but though one may have seen most of it, a similar impression of totality is never produced, for it is scattered over the world and divided by great seas. Russia is a whole—you could walk from Archangel to Kushk, and from Helsingfors to Vladivostok. The great Russian mystery is how all this is governed from the city on the Neva. The world has never known such centralisation.

Again, and similar to this first impression, the apparently inexhaustible variety of races. In Central Asia you come upon a company of recruits ; they are Poles and Finns. A Persian carries your baggage at Baku. Your servant in Siberia is a Circassian. Your guide at Tiflis is a Mingrelian. The Russian officer who took Merv is a Mussulman native—General Alikhanoff : you see—Ali Khan -off ? Great Russians and Little Russians, Cossacks of the Don, and Cossacks of the

Urals, Germans and Jews and Greeks—never did so multifarious a crowd bear a single name.

It is obvious, one might conclude, that with so vast and varied a territory, and so huge and ethnologically variegated a population, the natural penalty of centralisation—*qui trop embrasse mal étreint*—must be in process of development. The Russian Empire, from its very size and promiscuity, must be showing signs of going to pieces? There are thoughtful Russians who see danger in this direction, and declare it would become acute if Russia took Constantinople. I can only say that few such signs are outwardly visible. The sacred personality of the Tsar and the heavy hands of the authorities in St. Petersburg are just as evident and just as inevitable on the circumference as at the centre. Russia revolves as smoothly as the well-welded fly-wheel. So long as no flaw develops, nothing could be more impressive or more powerful than the fly-wheel.

After the vastness of country, the mixture of peoples, and the centralisation, comes the impression of strength. Russia is indescribably strong. Her strength makes you nervous. It is like being in the next field, with a golf-jacket on, to an angry young bull. The bull does not realise that the gate is there to stop him—therefore it will not stop him. Russia walks rough-shod over and through obstacles that an older, a more civilised, a more self-conscious country would manœuvre around for half a century. She wants Siberia—she takes it. She wants Central Asia—she takes it. She wants Port Arthur—she takes it. She wants Manchuria—she is taking it. She wants Persia—we shall see. A constitutional Finland is in her way—constitutional Finland must become a Russian province. Russia has suffered of late from an acute financial and commercial crisis, intensified by the heavy cost of the rising in China and the relief of famine. In view of this, one would expect to see expensive national enterprises postponed, or at least cur-

tailed. Not at all. Everything proceeds as regularly as though a million roubles came floating down the Neva every morning. The Great Siberian Railway is being pushed along at all speed. The army is being increased. The navy is being strengthened rapidly. Railways are building to the German frontier, to the Austrian frontier, in the Southern Caucasus, in Central Asia. During the ten years ending in 1899 18,000 miles of railway were constructed. In 1899 alone the increase was 2640 miles. And everywhere that Russia reaches she erects handsome and permanent buildings—railway stations, cathedrals, administrative offices, barracks. Few provincial towns in Europe or America have theatres and museums as fine as those of far-off Irkutsk and Tiflis.

The strength of Russia, again, strikes you in the inexhaustible masses of her common people. They are physically vigorous, they can live on a Chinaman's daily expenditure, they are wholly illiterate, wholly superstitious, absolutely obedient, even to death, to what they are told is the will of the Tsar, and they are increasing in numbers at an astounding pace.* Recruits may be seen with a band of straw twisted round the arm to show them which is their right hand. If a couple of hundred thousand of them are needed to increase the army, they weep and go. If they must be sacrificed in shoals to win a battle, well, they are never missed except each group in its own village, and not much there. There are two countries in the world where flesh and blood are cheap—China and Russia. This is the strength of the one; it will be the strength of the other if ever she is organised. I was once discussing the relations of England and Russia with a travelled Russian

* In the forty-six years from 1851–1897 the population of the Russian Empire increased 92 per cent. In the last-named year, according to Prince Krapotkin, it was 123,211,113, of which 94 millions were in European Russia proper, and 35 millions in the non-Russian provinces of the Empire, divided as follows: Finland, 2¾ millions; Poland, 9½ millions; Caucasia, 9¾ millions; the Kirghiz Steppes, 3½ millions; Trans-Caspia and Turkestan, 4¼ millions; Siberia, 5¾ millions.

officer as we walked through a barrack square. "Do you know why we should always beat you in the end?" asked my companion. As he spoke we came to the sentry, who was standing rigid at the salute. Touching the man upon the breast, he continued: "Because we can lose a hundred thousand of these without feeling it in any way." The brutal but true remark suggests the reflection that a peculiar strength belongs to Russia from the fact that the more civilised her neighbours become, while she stands still—that is, the greater the value they set upon human life in general and the higher the respect attaching to the individual man—the stronger in proportion does Russia become, for the more dearly in comparison are her rivals ever paying for their counters in the game of war. Up to a certain point, in other words, the civilisation of Russia's enemies is a millstone about their necks. It must not be supposed, however, that this brute force—this cheapness of flesh and blood—is the only strong side of military Russia. The enthusiasm and confidence of all her officers, and the intelligence and training of a large number of them, are also striking factors. A competent English military critic wrote of the last army manœuvres: "Certainly no class of men could be more whole-hearted in their work than the staff officers with whom I have come in contact. With a great enthusiasm for the routine of their profession, they appear to combine a wide interest, not only in military history, but in even the minutest details of contemporary war."

Among the impressions left by study of contemporary Russia, however, perhaps the most interesting is that of an approaching social change. Hitherto, speaking generally, there was no artisan class—no great social stratum below the nobility except the illiterate, stupid, kindly, superstitious peasantry. The growth of industry is producing such a class—a proletariat. Association in large numbers, the discussion of affairs, the influence of the fluent speaker, the circulation of the news-

paper, the use of machinery, residence in towns—all these combine to confer a certain education. With this rough education come new aspirations and the consciousness of ability to realise them. When a dozen men insist upon something hitherto denied them, a policeman may move them on; a hundred men may be dispersed by a troop of gendarmes; five hundred men may be surrounded by a regiment of Cossacks. But when two or three thousand men demand a change, for instance, in hours of labour, and not in one town only but in half a dozen towns simultaneously, their demand must be considered on its merits. This means a new class and a new era in Russia—a vital modification of a society hitherto resting upon the two pillars of autocracy and theocracy. The "labour question" has been born in Russia.

In this there is, so far, little of a revolutionary tendency. The share of the workmen in the students' disturbances has been exaggerated, and the students themselves are without qualifications to lead any great movement. Their views are but the dreams of disordered intellectual digestion—the workers themselves will soon leave them behind. The transition from agriculture to industrialism has been so sharp a change that some labour difficulties were inevitable at the outset. The Russian peasant does not easily accommodate himself to new conditions, nor, on the other hand, does the Russian employer. Both have to modify their habits to suit their new environment. But this industrial development was both right and inevitable in a country possessing the boundless natural resources of Russia. Perhaps it has been unduly hurried, but that is the Russian way—to be very slow in adopting a new principle, and then to embody it in act and fact with a rapidity that takes away the breath of an observer from less confident countries. The Russian authorities have the great advantage of beginning with the accumulated experience of other nations. Already their attitude toward labour

is, in many respects, far more modern and emancipated than one would have expected it to be, and, unless I misread all the signs, the future relations of employers and employed in Russia will be moulded by the democratic—for want of a better word—conditions which prevail in other aspects of Russian life; as exhibited, for instance, in the fact that the most powerful Minister the Empire has ever had began as a modest *employé* in a distant provincial railway station. I should not be surprised if I lived to see industrial co-partnership, for example, adopted as a primary condition of production and distribution in Russia before any other nation has advanced so far on the road to the solution of the old antagonism of money and men. I know that such a view will sound utopian to many, especially to the "old resident" in Russia, but it should be borne in mind that Russia starts in this matter from the point we have reached with so much difficulty and at such cost, and that to her a new theory, practical or ethical, of social relationships is not the suspected and disquieting thing it is to us.

If I have said comparatively little in this book about the difficulties and dangers which may beset Russia in the future, to warp her line of progress and mar her prosperity, it is because most writers seem to me to have dwelt overmuch on such topics and to have done less than justice to her achievements and her prospects. But I would not have it thought that I am blind to such considerations. I am no believer in any revolutionary upheaval, though, of course, the possibility of social disorder cannot be overlooked, but, in spite of her industrial progress and natural resources, it may be that the financial and commercial task she has undertaken will prove too great for her strength without foreign financial assistance, that her own action may prevent this being given, and that therefore a long period of stagnation is before her. I do not think so.

Indeed, I am convinced to the contrary, but I recognise the possibility. She may, of course, fall upon war with an equal Power, and this would be to her the greatest of all calamities in the present stage of her development. But I am certain that it is her ruler's fixed resolve to "seek peace and pursue it." Certain minor and distinct difficulties undoubtedly await her. For example, her nobility as a class is virtually insolvent, its great estates gone through mismanagement, its fortunes prodigally squandered. Vast areas of land are mortgaged to the Agrarian Banks, and many millions of acres have been sold under foreclosure. In 1899 these banks had advanced 1,351,518,884 roubles upon landed estates, in number 89,084, and in total area over 117,000,000 acres. During the previous five years the number of mortgaged estates increased by 22,675, and the amount of the mortgages by over 300,000,000 roubles. In most of these cases the original owners have no longer a rouble of interest in their properties. Societies of peasants are in many cases the purchasers, and the State, which has often helped the proprietors before, is considering a scheme to assign large grants of agricultural land in Siberia to the now landless class. But the Siberian peasants will naturally not view this process with favour, and the men who have failed to make land pay in Russia would hardly succeed better in Siberia. Here, then, is a grave problem, the solution of which is not apparent. Another is presented by the inability of the Cossacks, the pioneers and guardians of every Russian advance, to adjust their peculiar feudal institutions to the circumstances of modern life, and the consequent decline in their numbers and prosperity, and the difficulty in which many of them find themselves even to provide the horse and equipment (the State furnishing only their rifle and ammunition) which, with their personal service, is the return they make for their land. Above all, there is, of course, the danger that further bad harvests may render whole districts finally desolate.

Still another danger is the corruption and peculation which prevail in many public departments among underpaid officials.

My own conviction, however, is that these and other difficulties and dangers are small in comparison with Russian strength and resources. No one who remembers the past can doubt of her future. A glance at the map of the world is almost a sufficient basis for optimistic forecasts concerning her. The character and aims of the Tsar himself warrant the happiest auguries.

Russia is going ahead—that is my conclusion.* It is foolish and unscientific to judge her solely by the foot-rule of our older and different civilisation. She should be measured by a standard deduced from her own past, her own period of existence, and her own racial character. Then it will be seen that she stands, so far as virtue and vice go in a national development, very much where the rest of the nations do—that only the Judge who is able to cast up very long debit and credit accounts, in a very great ledger, can strike a true balance. For the rest, she excels most European nations in her vivacity of intellectual outlook, in her *insouciant* courage to affront great difficulties, in her freedom from traditional and theoretical top-hamper, and in her absolute confidence in her own glorious destiny. Beyond this, no nation in the world, save perhaps America, can vie with her in lavish wealth of natural resources, and when we add that she has never lacked the guidance of statesmen of profound sagacity and almost reckless courage, and that her present all-powerful Emperor is a man inspired, beyond all question, by lofty ideals, it should be

* Lord Rosebery, whose insight into foreign affairs is unequalled by that of any statesman of our time, has recently written of Russian policy as follows: "There is one signal quality which I specially admire in the policy of Russia. It is practically unaffected by the life of man or the lapse of time—it moves on, as it were, by its own impetus; it is silent, concentrated, perpetual, and unbroken; it is, therefore, successful."—"Questions of Empire," p. 27.

clear that the twentieth century must count Russia as one of its greatest factors in the movement and development of human society. I trust that this series of studies of Russia of to-day may have helped a little to bring home these conclusions, in the interests of peace and good-will and commerce, to readers on both sides of the Atlantic.

APPENDIX

1 rouble = 100 kopecks.

1 rouble = 2*s.* 1.3765*d.* or £0.1057; £1. = 9.4575 roubles.

1 rouble = $0.5145; $1. = 1.9433 roubles.

1 verst = 0.6628 mile; 1 mile = 1.5085 verst.

1 poud = 36.1128 lb. or 0.0161 ton.

1 ton = 62.0278 pouds.

1 kopeck per poud = 1.3117*s.* per ton.

1 rouble per poud = 0.7027*d.* per lb., or £6.5585 per ton.

1 rouble per poud = $0.1.425 per lb., or $31.9175 per long ton.

1 kopeck per verst = £0.001595 per mile.

1 rouble per verst = £0.1595 per mile.

1 poud moved one verst = 0.01068 ton moved one mile.

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